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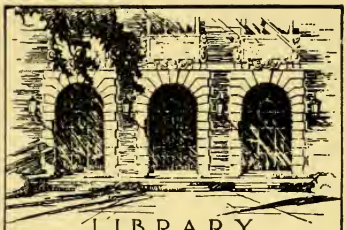

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MICHAEL TRESIDDER.

A CORNISH TALE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
R. BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1872.

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MICHAEL TRESIDDER.

CHAPTER I.

THE Rev. Henry Gilbert, vicar of Penaluna, had been a widower some six years, and would have found the care of his merry little girl and only child, Carrie, a serious addition to the work of a widely scattered parish, had it not been for the assistance of his mother. She was a dear old lady, still distinguished by all the fresh vivacity of

mind and the clearness of understanding, which had charmed her late husband half a century since. He had died rich and a distinguished barrister, but was then only working hard to make a name, or at least a place for himself, in that great profession, which was not much less crowded then than it is now.

The solitude of a home in North Cornwall had been a strange contrast to the pleasant society of her London life, when Mrs. Gilbert first came to it soon after her daughter-in-law's death. But instead of getting rusty from lack of contact with others, her mind seemed in quiet only to evoke out of itself fresh capacity to confer pleasure, as well as to create its own happiness.

All that she knew of Ruth Turn-

well was, that Professor Sterndale had spoken highly of her courageous struggle with poverty, as well as of her musical attainments, while he had, of course, mentioned the fact of the father's recent death. This last had secured for her new inmate Mrs. Gilbert's warm sympathy, while the former qualities had called for her respect. A favourable impression had therefore been created beforehand, which the girl's worn but interesting countenance at once brightened into interest.

Before long this interest became affection, as the softer and more attactive side of Ruth's character developed to a greater extent than she herself would have believed possible, under the genial influence of a life of unwonted

calm, and marked only by thoughtful kindness on the part of others.

Penaluna, like many a Cornish parish, not only extends over a great extent of wild country, but has, what may be called its parochial institutions, scattered about here and there, instead of collected into one decorous group, as is the more genial fashion in other counties.

The principal village, or town as its inhabitants always called it, is sprinkled along one hill-side; the church stands perched upon the summit of another down, nearly a mile away, and not a hundred yards from the edge of a precipitous coast; while the vicarage lies in a pretty ravine half-way between the two.

As for the Squire or Squires, they

are scattered still further, one of them owns nearly all the land, but has only a small house, at present let to a stranger; the other possesses the magnificent promontory called Tregathick Head, which tourists throng to see or to paint in the bright summer months, but where only gulls could build their nests.

After all, the Vicar cannot well quarrel with his absentee proprietors, for they have unfortunately in the West an illustrious example to keep them in countenance, as by far the largest income from the county is paid to the Dukes of Cornwall. The great attraction of the parish is, besides Tregathick Head, some five miles of nearly the grandest and most romantic cliff scenery in England. Great masses of slate

rock hurl themselves with innumerable strange contortions down into the depths of the deep green restless sea; or here and there at very rare intervals, and that only when the tide is well out, on to a smooth beach of brilliant white sand. In the summer all appears dancing light and dark cool shadow; but in the winter, the constant rain gives a sombre colouring to the land, while the waves dash and tear like hungry animals, in angry succession against the rocks.

There is, of course, little to be done by fishermen on such a coast, although during May, and a month or two after, some pretence at such a trade is made, and a few mackarel occasionally caught. The owners of the one or two boats are obliged, however, in the Autumn to

hoist them up like bales of cotton on to a ledge some fifty feet above the level of the sea, or there would certainly be little chance of their continuing in existence until the spring. The staple of Penaluna as of the whole district is slate, and nearly all the lads are employed in the quarries as soon as they have strength enough to use a chipper and hammer, or to wheel a barrow.

As most of the quarries are out on the face of the cliff, the cost of working is less here than in many other parishes, for the rubbish is simply tilted over into the sea; but till Ruth Turnwell became a little accustomed to the sight, it was rather startling to see boys of twelve or thirteen stand coolly looking over a sheer precipice of

near three hundred feet, and guiding the loads of stone as they were hoisted up from below. Down there the men would be at work in great caverns scooped out of the solid rock, and to which the only approach in the usual state of the tide was by a series of perpendicular ladders clinging to the front of the precipice, and appearing, after a manner that made her giddy even to look at, to hang forward as if ready to fall at any moment on to the rocks and the surf constantly boiling round them.

To those, whom accident has made independent of anxiety as to the means of subsistence, and has surrounded instead with all the easy pleasures which abundance of money and a recognised social position can produce, the smooth

current of one well-fed, agreeably spent day after another is apt to become tame and fatiguing; and some event is longed for to break the weariness of monotony. But to Ruth, the very uneventfulness of the six weeks, which she had now spent at Penaluna, constituted their greatest charm, and she desired no occurrence to break the stillness.

She had scarcely realised, as yet, that her quiet life was not some dream, from which any change, however small, must awaken her. This being so, it was with a sensation of regret, almost of annoyance and fear that one afternoon as she and her pupil were roaming on the cliffs, and amusing themselves by imagining quaint heads and faces among the jagged outline of

distant rocks, she heard Carrie Gilbert suddenly exclaim.

"There is papa coming up towards us, and somebody with him. I wonder if this is the gentleman who comes to stay with us to-day; look, Miss Turnwell, you can see them well now."

She turned as the child spoke, and watched the figures climbing up the hill. As they came nearer, there appeared to be something familiar to her about Mr. Gilbert's companion. Just then they went out of sight, as the path wound round the shoulder of the down, but before many minutes all uncertainty was dispelled by their reaching the top; and as Gilbert and Michael Tresidder walked up to her, the full bitterness of the half-forgotten scene in Compton Street

was revived, by the young man's past connection with her father's illness in Cavendish Square, and by his present serious implication in the success or failure of her brother's claim.

Tresidder was, of course, ignorant of this last cause for emotion; he only recognised, with some surprise, the girl in whose trouble he had heartily sympathised with at their first interview, and whose want of cordiality had repelled his kindly intended proffer of help at their last. The deep mourning of Ruth's dress was so significant, that he shook hands, with only a courteous remark, that he was glad to meet again, but without any reference to the cause of their former acquaintance.

Her extreme paleness was no surprise

to him, but Carrie Gilbert and her father were accustomed to the more natural and healthy complexion, which quiet happiness had already given to Ruth, and rather wondered at the great emotion which the sight of Michael appeared to produce.

His presence at Penaluna was easily explained by the clergyman's first remark—

"I did not guess that you knew my Eton and Oxford friend Tresidder, Miss Turnwell, or I should have told you that he had returned to Cornwall, and would be certainly here very soon. It is a good thing for us all in these parts that his wanderings are over, and that he has come back to settle at Portruan."

"Indeed, I can scarcely claim Mr.

Tresidder's acquaintance," said Ruth, rather painfully ; " we have only met twice."

Michael pitied her embarrassment, and turned the conversation by remarking on the glorious general view of Tregathick Head, and the great extent of romantic coast to east and west, which was visible from the high point on which they stood.

The afternoon was that of one of those beautifully bright days in the late Autumn, when the broad lights are especially charming. There was not, it is true, any of the bright colouring of autumnal foliage, which, in a woodland prospect, is so striking at this season, but the whole scene was bathed in a glow of mellow sunshine. The most distant headlands seemed to melt

in a warm mist, while in the foreground and middle distance, the downs rolled back from the top of the cliffs all a blaze with the second blossom of the furze-brake, or tinted more softly here and there by a few patches of purple heather.

In the course of their rambles, Ruth and Tresidder happened to be for a few minutes alone, while descending a rocky path, down which Henry Gilbert had been coaxed by his little daughter to run more quickly. Speaking with nervous haste, and with much effort, she said—

"I have often wished to thank you for your great kindness that night, Mr. Tresidder, and to ask you to forgive the rudeness with which I know that I offended you, when you called again

It was not that I was ungrateful, but my poor father was then dreadfully ill, and could not have borne the sight of a stranger."

She felt the last sentence to be a subterfuge, and hesitated in giving utterance to it, but her companion attributed this merely to emotion, and at once kindly stopped her.

"Do not speak of it again, please, Miss Turnwell, I wish indeed that I could have been of greater assistance. But there are many griefs to which outsiders can only add by intruding their sympathy; for this reason, I should not have spoken of the past, if you had not done so now. Will you let me say that I am very glad that you should have come here, for there is, I fully believe, no place in the world where grief can less

fail to be cured by kindness than Penaluna Vicarage."

As he finished speaking he joined the others, and no further private talk occurred; but when the walk was over, and Ruth Turnwell had time to think over alone the right course to be pursued, under the circumstance of Tresidder's continued presence, she could not be satisfied that it was fair to conceal from the family which had treated her, a stranger, with such real kindness, the fact of her quasi-antagonism of interest to their much older friend.

On the other hand, she did not think it necessary to talk of her brother's claim to a single person more than she could possibly avoid. After some doubt, she resolved to speak with perfect openness to old Mrs. Gilbert;

but to prevail upon her, if it might be, to keep the whole matter a secret, at least for the present.

She would not have sympathised in her brother Philip's chance of success much, in any case; but she had not yet discovered the real feelings of her own heart. She had not recognised the emotion with which Michael Tresidder had in some degree affected her upon their first meeting, and which had revived with greatly increased strength at his unexpected appearance this afternoon, for what it actually was. She thought that she felt regret only for the ruin of a man who seemed honest and straightforward, and the enriching of one whom, like her brother, she knew to be bad and cruel; but she would find out before very long, that the sensation, which

she supposed to be only gratitude for kindness, and pity for probable misfortune, was, in fact, the beginning of love.

CHAPTER II.

LD Mrs. Gilbert dearly loved a secret; and settled herself cosily in her own room the following morning to listen to Ruth's confidence. She did not, however, expect to hear a story in itself so singular, and to her, especially, the cause of so much conflicting emotion.

It was impossible to doubt that what the girl told her was true; and yet if true, it was difficult to realise

the sincerity of her resolution to abstain from all share in that wealth, which was probably hers by right. It was sufficiently strange that the father, old Nicholas Turnwell, who clearly had not been possessed of an energetic character in other respects, should have had the constant firmness requisite to keep his one great vow unbroken to the last. But in the first instance he had been actuated by love, as much as by pride; while afterwards, the easiness of his general disposition would lead him to acquiesce gradually in any existence of tolerable comfort.

It was only during the last year or two that he had experienced the hardships of real poverty; and by that time, feebleness of health had, perhaps, as much as strength of will, to do

with his making no attempt to rescue himself from the stream into which he had voluntarily plunged.

With Ruth, however, all this was different. Young and strong, she had felt the sting of absolute want already, and learnt how terribly sharp a pain it must cause; and yet she had deliberately chosen a course, which probably would, again and again during a long life, expose her to the same danger. She must be conscious of possessing great talents, and yet she refused to step on to the vantage ground, which might afford her noble opportunities for their use.

For a little while after the story was finished, the old lady sat in puzzled silence. The new affection for Ruth, which had wonderfully grown upon her

during the few weeks of their intercourse, was, to a certain extent, fighting with the old love, as for a son, with which she had for many years regarded Michael Tresidder.

Might not this woman, despite her earnest grey eyes and sweet firm lips, be all the time looking out for evidence in support of her brother's claim, and endeavouring to entrap her listener into giving some information or assistance? And yet, if so, why had she spoken, when it might have been more advantageous, and would have been so easy to remain silent?

This consideration, and the girl's face, conquered at last; and as she took up her knitting again, Mrs. Gilbert said:

"My dear, you have trusted me,

and I will trust you. But what you have said, has astonished and distressed me so much, that I must sit quietly here alone for a little while and think it over."

"Indeed, I knew that it must cause you pain; but it seemed impossible for me to remain silent without acting unfairly by you all."

"You were quite right, Ruth, and I am very glad you have spoken—very glad indeed; nor am I hard-hearted enough not to pity you for the stormy life you have led; but it is a great shock to me to know that Mr. Tresidder, my Michael, is really in danger of losing his fortune. Hitherto, we have only supposed that some plot was hatching, which would be easily enough defeated by-and-bye, if it ever,

indeed, gained strength to break the shell."

With a half-smile at her own homely simile, but with much sadness of expression, Mrs. Gilbert nodded a kind good-bye to Ruth, who had risen and now left the room.

The remaining days of Tresidder's visit at Penaluna passed rapidly, and except at meal times, there was little necessity for Ruth's meeting him. He observed that she usually made some excuse for not spending with the rest of the family the long winter evenings, but supposed this to be her usual habit. He also noticed that she appeared, on the few occasions on which they were together, rather to shrink from him; and he imagined the reason to be that his association with her past sor-

rows rendered his society a constant source of pain. With natural good-nature, therefore, he avoided, as much as possible, any direct appeal to her in conversation, or any other notice beyond what ordinary politeness rendered necessary.

To Ruth's peace of mind, Tresidder's stay at the Vicarage became each hour more dangerous. It was difficult to prevent her thoughts from continually dwelling upon him, and if a woman is thus forced to think about a man, she can scarcely remain neutral towards him; she must either love or hate. In this instance, the latter alternative had long ago become impossible.

As generally happens, when two people are particularly anxious to keep out of

one another's way, circumstances insist on throwing them together. The day before Tresidder was to leave Penaluna, Miss Turnwell and her charge wandered, in their afternoon walk, down to the rocky beach which, when the tide was very low, stretched along under the greater portion of the precipitous coast.

Anything more unlike the soft smooth sand of more conventional seaside places it would be difficult to find, than the huge boulders of slate *débris* over which they had scrambled. Both were, however, capital climbers, and had succeeded in reaching, just before the waves cut off the approach, a large gap formed in the face of the cliff by the workings of a slate quarry. From this point it was a striking scene as the tide came in.

The quarry had been in work for many years, and had scooped a great square-sided notch out of the hard rock, as clean as a large truss of hay can be cut from a hay-rick; while at present the stone was being raised from a cavern, whose wide, low entrance, divided by a massive pillar of slate, was but little above the level of the beach, and had the effect of a cyclopean foundation for the sheer black precipice which rose to the height of some three hundred feet above it.

Standing in the mouth of this cave, talking to some of the men and lads employed in the quarry, Ruth Turnwell was annoyed to see Mr. Gilbert and his guest, who had evidently been inspecting the works and were just about to leave.

There was only one path by which, now that the tide had shut in the cove, it was possible to return; since the perpendicular ladders, up and down which the labourers scrambled like flies, were only fit for quarrymen or monkeys; so that the whole party joined and commenced the ascent together.

No portion of the path would have done for nervous people; but the beginning was especially difficult, being, first a narrow winding ledge, and then, for about twenty feet, nothing but a set of very rough and slippery steps, which had been chipped out of an upright wall of rock, forming one side of a huge crack, or cranny, in the cliff.

Ruth had more than once before

scrambled up here safely, and therefore declined any assistance now; but whether the rain of the morning had rendered the steps more than usually slippery, or whether her emotion at being thus thrown into the company of the man she wished to avoid, made her grasp of hand and foot less firm than usual, she at all events missed her hold about the third step, and fell down again to the ledge at the bottom.

The distance was very small, but the rock was very hard, while the girl's courage was greater than her limbs were strong. One foot, as she fell, was twisted underneath her, and she heard that peculiarly unpleasant little crack, which announces that a bone is broken. She had too much spirit to scream out, but could not prevent her

face from becoming deadly pale, nor, much as she might wish, could she move even into a sitting posture, without the aid of Tresidder's arm round her.

There was considerable difficulty in knowing what was best to be done, but not a moment to be lost in doing something.

The girl was at present resting on the narrow shelf, which wound up from the beach to the opening of the cranny, and it was manifestly impossible that she could be carried up the rest of the ascent; while the water, which was rising rapidly would soon cut off their retreat even from the beach and cavern, where she might, at all events, have quiet and space to lie.

Gilbert hastened to see his little

daughter safely up to the easy part of the path, and then returning, he and Michael, with the quarrymen's assistance, managed to carry Ruth back to this cave, while Jack Bray, one of the lads, was sent off up the ladders in search of a doctor.

It is easier to send for a medical man in a country district than to find one, and the two gentlemen had, in a few whispered words, decided upon what must be done. Jack was told to run to the Vicarage and despatch a messenger on one of the Vicar's ponies, but to get himself, from old Mrs. Gilbert, and bring back at once, anything she thought would be useful.

"Miss Turnwell does not seem to like my helping her," said Tresidder; "at least I fancied that she shrunk

from my arm just now; but every minute the difficulty of setting the broken limb by-and-bye becomes greater. I am a bit of a doctor, and think I can manage it if she would let me."

"I will ask her at once, and am sure your offer will be accepted."

Gilbert went back, as he spoke, to Ruth, and found that she had herself discovered the fracture to be one of the bones just above the ancle.

With some difficulty, and much pain, she had taken off the shoe and stocking, and was now bathing the limb with sea-water; but it was already much swollen, and the suffering was, from the intense pallor of her face, evidently very great. She simply had no alternative but to accept Tresidder's offer with gra-

titude, and her strength being a little revived by some wine from a flask Gilbert fortunately had with him, the operation was performed in a rough but efficient manner. Splints were cut from the handle of one of the quarry mallets, and bandages formed by tearing a shirt into strips.

The fatigue of the process was, however, severe, and that coupled with the conflict of emotion, which this personal attendance of the man she loved aroused in Ruth's mind, was more than the poor girl's strength could support. She fainted away, and only revived after some continued application of the remedies Jack Bray had by this time brought back from the Vicarage. As very probably another fainting fit might come on, and absolute care and rest was

evidently of deep importance, the others resolved to convey her home at once.

There was only one possible way of lifting the invalid to the top of the cliffs, and the difficulty would not be lessened or removed by any length of of waiting, while delay might have serious consequences.

In almost all of the numerous quarries scattered about the slate district of North Cornwall, it is the custom to convey the stone, while yet in a rough state, to the top, and square it into sizes there. For this purpose wooden troughs, about five feet square and one deep, are used, called, technically, "buckets." At the top of the workings is a large "whim," turned by a horse, or, in some cases, by steam, and a platform called a "papote-head,"

projecting forward over the face of the precipice.

Standing as they do, in the coast quarries, upon dizzy heights, as if just ready to jump off into the restless sea far below, these papote-heads are no slight addition to the wild and picturesque effect of the scene. Two massive guide chains are firmly fixed above, at a higher point than the platform, and stretched obliquely to some rocks close to the beach below. Upon these the buckets are worked by a drum and pulleys, in such a manner that one is always coming up while the other is going down.

The weight of the bucket full of slate is thus distributed over two chains, and is continually shifting from one link to another; and by this contrivance, also,

loads can be raised obliquely, instead of only from a point immediately below the papote-head.

Taking away the small section of mankind, who are really incapable of cool courage under any circumstances, it appears that what is called "pluck" is far more a matter of custom, or of education, than of nerve. To take a trivial instance, many a man will ride boldly to hounds across a difficult country, who yet will hesitate and walk as nervously as a child across a crowded street.

The workmen in these quarries will run up and down ladders, where a single false step, or mistaken hold, would be certain death. The Cornish boys of ten or twelve years old will scramble after gull's eggs about rocks which appear to afford no foot-hold for a cat, or will

stretch themselves out over the edge of precipices, which make most men giddy even to contemplate from a safe distance, and yet neither one or the other are ever, or scarcely ever known to go up and down by these buckets, where they would only have to sit still, and then could scarcely fail of making the passage safely.

When Michael suggested that Miss Turnwell could be lifted up most comfortably in this manner, there was a long breath of something like consternation from the ring of hardy fellows who stood round, and more than one muttered that "it was a terrible bad road for the lady, sure enough;" while anxious to help, as they had been before, no one seemed willing to assist in this.

Since, however, it was very evident that there was nothing else to be done—since even the captain of the quarry acknowledged that it might be a "brave little while" before Ruth could walk up as she had been used to do, while the cavern, warm and dry as it might be, was scarcely a pleasant sick room for anyone, much less for a lady; they set about preparing the bucket, with gentle care and kindness, but with the air of men making ready a shroud.

A soft bed was contrived with jackets, and Miss Turnwell was placed carefully upon it, so that her weight should be distributed as equally as possible; over her, Gilbert's and Tresidder's coats were put as being lighter than those of the quarrymen.

Ruth when asked, if she was willing

to venture, answered Michael in a low voice only.

"You are very kind, I will do whatever you think best," and indeed she was by this time far too ill to make any objection. A lad had been sent off to the Vicarage to have a carriage brought as near the top of the cliff as possible, and some two or three of the men remained at the bottom to ensure the proper starting of the bucket with its novel burden; while Tresidder, Gilbert, and the others all mounted by the ladders to the papote-head in order to control by their personal care the steady working of the whim and chains.

When all was ready, the horse was started, and slowly, in perfect silence, except for the creaking of the ma-

chinery, the difficulty of transit was accomplished. As any movement might have been dangerous, the coverings had been somewhat tightly fastened over her, and the cramp caused by them; added to the great exhaustion produced by the bodily pain and mental emotion Ruth had experienced within the last hour, not a little assisted the soothing effect of the gently swinging motion of the bucket as it rose into the air.

When they lifted the girl carefully out, at the end of the ascent, and carried her to the carriage, she was in a semi-unconscious state. It was not until after several hours of real rest in a comfortable bed, and much kind nursing from Mrs. Gilbert, that it could be decided whether or not

some shock to the system far more dangerous than the mere fracture had not been produced.

CHAPTER III.

"ONE glass to our successful work to-morrow morning, Philip, and then to bed," said Spider Burrows, as on the 24th of December he and Turnwell sat over the parlour fire of the "Tresidder Arms," at Portruan.

"I have given up my pleasant night in town, and the jolly supper of our Shakespeare Club that I might come down to this dull corner of England

upon your business, and I am not going to have the trouble thrown away by your getting beastly drunk as usual."

"Since you are here, you may as well be civil, and put a stop for once to your sarcastic remarks," retorted his companion. "With all your cleverness you have not yet discovered the main point, and I do not see but that I could have managed just as well by myself."

In point of fact, their plan of action had been somewhat disconcerted by Turnwell's abrupt dismissal from Mr. Townsend's office, and his consequent inability to glean any further information from the Tresidder estate papers. He had, however, as we have seen already, learnt the most important matter,

i.e. the exact provisions of the settlement under the will of old Squire Joseph, his great grandfather; and had he been a man of more self-control, he might to a certain extent have even benefited by the enforced change of plan, for he was now free to devote his time to hunting up disinterested witnesses who could prove every particular of his father's life, since his arrival at the Bull and Mouth, when first he came to London.

"The Spider" had consented to give convincing proof of his own belief in the validity of the claim, by advancing money for the other's support; but he knew his man, and was careful to lend very small sums at a time, so as to keep Philip thoroughly under command. The excitement even of the

great stakes for which he was playing proved quite insufficient, every now and then, to prevent this young man, now that all office restraint was at an end, from breaking out into more and more frequent fits of his old debauchery; and, in fact, he was only stopped at all by want of money.

To trace the various places where a man of position has resided during the last twenty or thirty years, and to find people who are willing to remember him, is, of course, easy enough, on the one hand; while on the other, such is the freemasonry of rags, that it is not much more difficult to ascertain the haunts of an absolute beggar, when you have once succeeded in convincing his proletarian companions that you do not hail from Scotland Yard.

But to learn much about the life of a man who has very nearly, but never quite, lost his hold on respectability, is extremely difficult. It is not surprising that when merely down in the world, and not as yet reduced to absolute rags, such a one naturally endeavours to hide his painful descent from public gaze, and, therefore, shrinks from the fellowship of his new, no less than from the possible contempt of his old associates.

This had been especially the case with poor Turnwell; and Philip was occupied several weeks in perfecting his chain of evidence in London, before he was able to enter on the most important part of his investigation, the proof of the marriage. Not a scrap of paper nor a word could be found

among the dead man's letters to throw light upon this, further than to show that it had taken place in that interval of some three days which lay between his departure from Portruan and his arrival in town.

"You had better go down to Cornwall, and, keeping your own counsel, get any information you can quietly in the neighbourhood," Burrows had said at last; and in compliance with this advice, Turnwell had been for the last fortnight at the hotel at Padstow, the neighbouring seaport, and had only that day come over to his present quarters in order to meet the lawyer.

At Padstow he had been little noticed, and set down for either a mine adventurer or a speculator in slate quarries; well-clothed strangers of both sorts

being common enough. It was easy for a man of his habits to get into conversation over a friendly glass with the country people, and not unnatural that he should pass from speaking of the principal mines in the neighbourhood, those at Portruan, to the old story of the missing member of the family who owned them.

One day the object of his search appeared to be within his grasp, for he had chanced to put up, during a storm of rain, at the very roadside inn to which Nicholas Tresidder had ridden on the night he left home.

The old couple who then kept it were dead; but their daughter, who was now old also, still reigned in the house.

Betty Hawken had long been confined

to her chair with rheumatics, and was all the more ready for a gossip. Philip was in an amiable mood that day, and the good woman, flattered by his attention, rambled on about the many strange things which had happened in the house. This brought up the singular story of Nicholas Tresidder; and "This room is the very place," said she, "where the poor young man was last seen by any of his friends."

"How was that?" asked Philip, pricking up his ears.

"Well, father and mother were humble, for such as he to call friends, sure enough," returned Betty, folding up her knitting, and settling herself in for a long tale; "but the young Squire was always kind and pleasant

in his ways. Mother had been his nurse years before, and t'was brave and lonely for the boy as he grew up to have no companions at the dismal great house, but that stern old father of his."

"Surely the Manor is a bright house," put in Philip, with something of an owner's offended pride. He had been over the place a few days before as a stranger, and gloated at the prospect of soon possessing its spacious gardens and luxurious rooms.

"Ah! yes, 'tis beautiful now; but it was different then," replied Betty, shaking her head. "The last Squire, the Colonel, built all the terraces and such like, and Lady Eveline worked a marvellous change inside. Dear lady! there was sure to be

happiness and brightness wherever she came."

It is unnecessary to follow the old woman's rambling talk, since she only repeated, with many incidental wanderings, part of those events which we have already witnessed in our opening chapter; and then much to Philip's disappointment ended her story thus:

"Poor man, poor man! we could never hear tidings of him more. When she found that he was gone in the morning, mother at first thought nothing of it; but, after the man (who took his horse home) came back and told us of the rumour up at the House, that there had been some terrible quarrel between old master and his son, we got frighted a bit. Father walked off to Padstow and inquired

about on the road, but never a sign or a trace could we gain. We made sure at last that young Squire had gone away, (he was main fond of the sea) with a strange crew of fishermen, who had been seen in the port the night before, but had now left again."

"But did not anyone know where the strangers came from, and for what place they were bound?" asked Philip, "surely they must have talked about themselves."

"Nay, Sir," replied Betty, bridling up a little, "we did try to learn of course; but it seems they had kept their tongues quiet towards the Padstow folks. Indeed I did hear tell that they were thought to mention Bristol, or some such up country place to one

another; if so they would not have any acquaintances in these parts."

Acting upon this meagre clue as best they could, and knowing that a coach from Bristol used to run to the Bull and Mouth, the confederates had caused all the parish registers in that town and its neighbourhood to be searched—but of course failed to find the desired entry. Both men supposed it next to impossible that Nicholas would have risked a marriage under a false name, within the limits of his own county, or that if he had, it would not have soon become known; forgetting, as even the most acute of us will occasionally, the vast difference in personal notoriety which the last thirty years had effected in country districts. They had, therefore, not as yet thought

it worth while to pursue the inquiry further west upon the old coach road than Devonshire, on the north coast of which county, at Ilfracombe, Lynton, or Bude, a Bristol boat might be likely enough to put in.

'Twas impossible to know whether the ceremony (if indeed it had taken place at all as the character of Nicholas, no less than many expressions in his letters, rendered almost a matter of certainty) had been registered in the name of Turnwell, or in that of Tresidder, and they decided now to risk the bold move of inviting publicity for their claim. As Burrows said, the evidence they had acquired could not be weakened, if all the world knew it; while there were two advantageous possibilities. The present possessor

might be frightened into proposing terms, and strangers might be led by curiosity to rub up their recollection of the matter, and perhaps volunteer valuable information. All these chances had been for the last time weighed during their talk this evening, and the next morning Philip was to adopt openly the name of Tresidder; letters were to be sent to every parish clergyman in Cornwall instituting a search in their registers, and, accompanied by Burrows, he was to call at Portruan Manor House itself, ask for an interview with Michael, and explain his identity, as if he were acting from a generous impulse, and with a desire for cousinly friendship.

A generation has come and gone since that wild winter's night, when father

and son stood face to face for their last angry interview in the old hall, with its dark-timbered roof. The pitiless rain and cutting wind which beat against the windows on that Christmas Eve, formed a fit accompaniment to the grating words of the stern Squire, and harmonized with them, (if the agreement of harsh sounds may be so spoken of,) as truly as does the bright clear sun, which has just risen above the woods on this Christmas morning, with the happy genial temper of the pleasant party which is now collected within the old grey walls.

The aspect of the place has changed externally, as much as does the disposition of the present differ from that of its former master. That house which used to frown gloomily from its rough

knoll upon a neglected half-wild forest, now smiles merrily on exquisite pleasure grounds, and a park sufficiently trim to suggest comfort and domestic life; but where good taste has heightened rather than smoothed away every picturesque feature of the natural landscape.

It is yet early, and the dangerous pair at the village inn are still sleeping, when the window of an upper room at the Hall is thrown open, and Michael Tresidder comes out from it on to the balcony formed by an oriel beneath. Charmed by the crisp morning air, he remains for a long time leaning on the parapet, and allows his eyes to wander with real enjoyment, and with some feeling of pardonable pride over the bright scene which has so long formed

his home, and now lies before him glistening in a cloak of hoar frost.

This front of the house, which faces the west, is in deep shadow, as also the wide terrace immediately beneath; but the light has already caught the ivied balustrades of other terraces, which ran out one beyond another, down to the bottom of the knoll. From the last broad flight of steps the sunbeams ricochet on to the small lake, which fills the hollow of the valley upon this side, and splashing here and there upon the open glades, or losing themselves for a time among the stems of the great trees in the park beyond, rest finally upon the shimmering waves of the distant sea.

"I certainly do love the old house dearly," said Michael half-aloud, as he

turned to leave the balcony; "how charmingly Lady Margaret would reign here as mistress," he continued, sighing; "there are not many women I could bear to see in the place my dear mother filled so well."

For a few minutes only, as he shut the window, he allowed himself to dwell upon these thoughts, and then breaking from the dream, and dashing into the vigorous reality of a capacious bath, on which the water was thinly coated with ice, he might have been heard to mutter amid the fuss and sputter always connected with a tub on a winter's morning—

"Deuced lucky thing to be George Ellerton, sure enough! I wonder how the old fellow is getting on? He must be half way homewards, and have had a nice

experience of the 'Ariel' as a winter residence. I expect they will find it pretty cold and tossy in the Bay of Biscay."

Under his many-chimneyed roof, Tresidder had succeeded in assembling some few days since, and stowing away with much luxurious comfort, most of the pleasanter members of the Autumn party at Healey Towers, and a lively addition of Irish cousins, and a sprinkling of Cornish neighbours into the bargain.

Bertie Cunninghame had been so determined that the *début*, as he called it, of the expectant M.P. should be successful, that he absolutely buried himself in the wilds of Cornwall a whole week before the rest of the guests arrived. The ancient housekeeper had been a little

offended, when first questioned by him as to her arrangements; but was soon coaxed into cordial admiration of his merry tact, and won by his quick appreciation of every little change which would not only make the inmates more comfortable, but bring out the peculiar charms of the mansion — as Mrs. Hervey called it—to fresh advantage.

Hitherto all had been successful; good horses, accustomed to the fences, had carried the men well after the Four Burrow hounds, and Lord Kilfenora had shouted with delight on finding himself in a stone wall country almost as full of foxes, and—owing to the height and solidity of the walls—ten times more dangerous even than Galway itself. The less adventurous sportsmen found fair

sport in the woods, while Lord Sunderland had the opportunity he had often wished for, of practically studying both mines and slate-quarries; and after despatching daily a ponderous official bag full of—or at least capable of holding—innumerable letters, used to scale vast precipices, or descend bottomless shafts with amusing ardour and considerable profit to the men employed in the works.

With his habitual earnestness, he had thrown himself thoroughly into the new pursuit, and surprised and delighted the Cornishmen by the energy of his investigations, and the accuracy of his remarks; till they began to think that this "great Government Lord from London" knew as much about "stamps," and "kibbels," or the mysteries of

"hollybobbing," as they did themselves.

Last night a great dinner had been held in the Hall, after the hospitable Christmas fashion anciently common in England. By a little contrivance, Bertie had managed to accommodate the whole parish who were able to leave home.

All had sat down and dined together, beginning with the Squire and his guests, including the Vicar, at the upper table; and going on through yeomen and farmers, next below the salt, to the villagers, right down even to the poorest day-labourer in the place. After this, a merry evening had been passed with games and dancing; and amongst other things, Cunninghame had, as usual, broken out in a fresh place,

and enchanted the rustic mind with his skill as a conjuror.

To-day, Christmas Day, was to be passed quietly; but next week, on New Year's Day, there was to be a grand ball to all the gentry of the county, and the whole house would be yet further stretched to accommodate many who would come from a distance.

Happily, Tresidder's guests were none of them of that class of ultra-fashionables whose artificial grandeur is principally kept up by contempt of the "natives" they may happen to meet on a country visit; and their merry breakfast-party this morning was only a specimen of the genial temper which had reigned all the week.

Michael himself had no finery about

him. The utmost which he felt, and there was little harm in doing so, was a pleased sense of hospitable possession; and Michael may be excused that the happiness of all his surroundings was reflected in his own bright eyes and laughing countenance, as he turned to the servant, who handed a card, and said, with rather a frightened air, "that two gentlemen wished to speak to him."

Welshmen are fairly accustomed to find their own names, both Christian and surname, possessed with equal right by, at least, half their neighbours; but probably all other people have a natural feeling of antagonism, partly humorous and partly earnest, when suddenly brought in contact with their double.

We doubt if even John Smith ever met another John Smith without experiencing some such a sensation, and without longing, if decent excuse could only be found, to off coats and set to, like a pair of schoolboys, until one or the other had gained an exclusive right to the designation. This, at least, was Michael's first sensation on reading upon this card the name of "Mr. Tresidder," and with a half-uttered "Plague on the fellow; what right has he to my name!" but with no deeper feeling of annoyance, he got up to ascertain what his visitors might want.

He had, however, scarcely risen from his chair, when the announcement of the death of Nicholas Tresidder in the "Times," and the conversation with

Mr. Townsend rushed back to his memory, and naturally connected themselves with this new incident.

For a moment he paused, feeling that he could not refuse to see the callers, as that would be a mere act of cowardice; but on the other hand, that it might be wiser for him to have a witness to any conversation with them.

Lord Sunderland, to whom only he had spoken on the subject at Healey, was the natural person to make again his confidant, and to ask to be present at the interview. The Marquis readily consented, and with more of curiosity than with any expectation of serious difficulty, the two gentlemen walked to the justice-room, a small apartment near the entrance-door, into

which Philip and his lawyer had been shown.

What passed at the meeting must be related in another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

HERE were many rooms, both large and small, at Portruan Manor, but not one, to masculine eyes at all events, which looked more attractive than the cozy little square with a bay window facing south-east, which was Michael's study. This had been the justice-room in former times, when the squires of Portruan, like most other country gentlemen of the period,

administered rough and ready, somewhat high-handed, but not altogether unjust law, in their own fashion, and on their own hearthstone.

The bare walls, with only a shelf or two of musty treatises on parish or game law, had gradually disappeared under the host of guns, fishing-rods, whips, &c., which now covered all but the space occupied by two pictures; of these, that over the fireplace was a sweet full length portrait of Lady Eveline Tresidder, taken just after her marriage, and this gave by its presence an air of grace and refinement to her son's sporting snuggery. It was not, however, at this charming work of art, that his two strange visitors were looking as Michael and Lord Sunderland entered,

but at the other picture, also a portrait, and framed into the panel facing Lady Eveline. This last was a likeness of Arthur Tresidder, the "Old Squire" as he was usually called; and though a poor painting, recalled vividly his resolute handsome head, with its hard well-defined features. The face was in profile, and as the door opened Philip's head presented itself in the same position, as he stood looking up at it intently. In another minute he had turned away, but not before the eyes of both Michael and Lord Sunderland had naturally enough glanced from him to the object of his examination, and both men had been much startled by the strong resemblance between

the living head and that in the picture.

It was owing to this, as much as to the fact that he was nearer to him than was Burrows, that Michael Tresidder asked Philip if he was the owner of the card he had received. Upon his assenting and introduction of Burrows as his friend, their host begged both to sit down, while he himself took his usual place at the writing table in the window. Lord Sunderland, meanwhile, walked to an arm-chair by the fire-side merely acknowledging the respectful bows of the others who, of course, knew him well by sight, by as slight a notice as courtesy would permit.

"We had expected to speak to you alone, Mr. Michael Tresidder," said

the Spider, who thought it more wise to take the conversation into his own hands than to trust his client's discretion; but as we presume his Lordship is present at your express wish, we cannot but be glad that you should have the great benefit of his advice and will at once proceed."

Tresidder who had marked the full designation, unusual from a stranger, which the speaker had used in addressing him, signified his assent to this course, but without speaking; and having by this time recovered the surprise at the likeness between Philip and the "Old Squire," he was endeavouring to account for the fact that, independently of that, something in the man's face appeared to

be familiar to him. "I have reason to think you saw this announcement in the 'Times'" continued Burrows, handing him the old copy of the 'Times' with the published death of Nicholas Tresidder, "both because it would be unlikely to escape your notice, and because I know that you had an interview with Mr. Townsend in London a few days afterwards."

"I did see it," replied Michael; as the circumstances of that visit came back to his memory, and with them the explanation of his feeling as to Philip's face, "and I did, as you say, have an interview soon after with Mr. Townsend partly on that subject. But I should wonder at your knowledge of the circumstance, did I not recognise in this gentleman the clerk

who was in the room with us at that time. He had not, however, then done me the honour of assuming my name; and unless some explanation of the change can be quickly given, I must decline to detain you further."

"Quite natural, Sir," answered Burrows, "you shall not be kept waiting. You are right in your recognition; my friend had then only within a few days learnt the name he was really entitled to, and which he now bears. He only discovered it by accident after the death of his father. I see you are impatient and I come to the point at once—the same event which is announced in that newspaper, for that father, although choosing to call himself by

another surname, was no other than the identical Nicholas Tresidder, who disappeared from this house thirty years ago."

Michael rose impatiently as he said—

"All this would affect my estate rather than myself, and seems to be more for Mr. Townsend's hearing than for mine. He will judge best how far you are able to prove your assertion."

Philip also rose, and was about to answer angrily, when the Spider stopped him, and in the same quiet decided tone as he had formerly used, replied—

"I shall, of course, communicate with Mr. Townsend; but I suppose I was wrongly informed that you were a man who loved openness and fair-

play, even if the cause was a personal one.

"We have come here to-day, Mr. Michael Tresidder—(with a stress on the Christian name, as before)—and we are, as I said, especially glad to see that you have the presence of a nobleman, like the Marquis of Sunderland, at your side; because my client wished to give you friendly warning of the strength of his title. He does not wish, or expect, that you will take any step without proper consultation, but he is anxious that all should be done, on his part, to conduct the matter in a friendly and cousinly spirit. You object to that word, I see"—for his listener had stared haughtily at the implied relationship—"but you cannot look from my client himself to that

picture hanging over his head, without acknowledging that there is probably, I may almost say certainly, some relationship between you. We have come here—Mr. Tresidder insisted upon coming—to tell you, first of all the world, what this relationship is; how he found it out; and what proof we have."

After consulting Lord Sunderland by a look, Michael determined to hear the story out, and reseated himself. It was clearly impossible that the family likeness could be an invention, and it might be, that the men were really acting from honourable motives.

"I will mention nothing that I have not witnesses to prove," Burrows went on to say; "and yet I am well aware

that the story is scarcely credible. It is, in fact, even less so than it now appears to you, for my client's father never left England, nor went out of sight, as it were, of the property, which, for twenty years, was rightly his. We know, from his papers, that he was aware of—that he actually put on mourning for—his father's death; and yet that he continued to adhere to the life of work he had chosen. We know that he became gradually poorer and poorer, until he died in a wretched lodging in London; while all the time he kept this secret locked in his breast; as closely as the papers, which have since disclosed it, were, during his life, preserved in the box which hid them from all eyes but his own."

Spider Burrows saw that his words had already impressed both of those to whom they were addressed, with, at least, a strong suspicion of their truth. The statesman was listening with close and concerned attention, while Michael's face had lost that air of haughty impatience which marked it ten minutes since, no less than its habitual look of careless good humour. His features had grown to be grave and stern, for he could not fail to perceive at once all that was involved in this probable realisation of what had only once before passed before his mind: then only as an unpleasant dream, to be quickly put to flight by Mr. Townsend's confident assurances.

"You speak of a strange story,

indeed," he said, as the other's voice stopped. "How far you can bear out your assertion, and prove it, of course, can only be shown by-and-by. But you have said enough to make me willing to listen to you, if you choose now to go further into detail."

His voice had the same pleasant ring as ever, though he was, perhaps, rather more deliberate in his utterance than usual.

Burrows, as he watched him, was struck by the man's quiet self-control, and admired the face with its present vigorous expression, far more than he had with its original sunny *insouciance*. With terse simplicity, which was artfully calculated to bear the impression of absolute truth, and to

appear anxious also to spare Michael's feelings, he related all that we have already heard, and very many further particulars, both of Nicholas Turnwell's life, and of the strange discovery of the letters upon his death-bed.

As he finished the story, he motioned to Philip, and both rose to leave before Michael had time to make any remarks. To this movement, which was made purposely to prevent any awkward questions, he gave the semblance of a delicate thought by saying—

"We will not intrude upon you further at this time. We did not come to gain admissions from you, but to perform a duty, a kindness to you. If you want further talk with

Mr. Tresidder in the next few days, he and I shall be for a week at the village inn."

"That may be all very dignified and grand," burst out Philip at last, when they were already some little way from the house, his astonishment at the abrupt termination of the visit keeping him silent till then; "but I thought we intended to bring that stuck-up cousin of mine on to his knees a little, and here we seem only to have laid open our own hand."

"You used to have some brains where your own interests were concerned," replied Burrows, contemptuously; "but I suppose wine has muddled them away, or you would never have told me that Michael

Tresidder was the kind of empty-headed swell you represented him to be. And you might have found out beforehand that Lord Sunderland was here. If it had not been for that blessed picture, we should have gone upon a fool's errand, and no mistake. I thought that directly the two men entered."

"Should have gone!" repeated his companion. "You might as well acknowledge that we, or rather you, have made a mess of the morning's work."

"Not a bit of it," answered Burrows, coolly. "We have gained far more than I ever hoped. I will not go so far as to say that either Michael Tresidder or his grand friend implicitly believe every word I said,

or that I have told all there is to tell; and I don't think he is likely to embrace his affectionate cousin; but in spite of their suspicion of me, and his contempt for you as a relation (you need not look so insulted, man, it won't alter the fact), I am pretty sure that both feel in their own minds that the odds are heavily against them."

This judgment was not far wrong, for the interview had left a very serious impression on both. Neither of the two gentlemen spoke for a few minutes after their ill-omened visitors had left. Michael remained with face firmly set, and that inwardly concentrated expression with which brave men meet the first shock of unexpected calamity, and

think over how they best can meet it.

Lord Sunderland was unwilling for a few minutes to disturb him, and, indeed, sympathised too deeply in his young friend's trouble not to require, himself, some little time for reflection. Both ran over in their own minds every word which Burrows had spoken; both were unable to avoid the perpetually recurring remembrance of that wonderful family likeness between the "old Squire" and this *soi-disant* grandson, which appeared to form a running commentary upon every sentence, and to render the truth of each so very probable.

Crossing the room at last, the peer placed his hand on Michael's shoulder, and spoke with most unusual warmth.

"I am sorry—more sorry than I can express; but you hardly need to be told that. There is, no doubt, an awkward air of reality in much of this story, and in that young man's face, in spite of its dissipated, almost blackguard appearance; but there are many possible explanations of the likeness; and it will take a good deal more than that to get him the property. Of course, you will telegraph to Mr. Townsend; no time should be lost in doing that."

"Thank you. Yes, I suppose I must; though I am sorry to disturb him with business on such a day as this. It will be a sharp pull to give up the old home; and Mr. Philip Tresidder, or whatever his real name

may be, does not look like the man to treat either estate or people well; but that, after all, is no concern of mine. If I am convinced of his right, I will put no difficulties in the way of his asserting it."

"No, no; of course not," replied Lord Sunderland; "no honest man would, and you are a gentleman into the bargain. But you owe it to yourself to test the claim very strictly before you think of yielding to it. Depend upon it, there is a screw loose somewhere, or they would not have come here. All that about friendly consideration, &c., for you, is simply nonsense. If this cousin, as he calls himself, could prove his identity now, he would either not have come to you at all, or when he

did come, would have spoken for himself. But have you a copy of the settlement, under which they claim. I only knew before in a general way that there was some old entail?"

"Here it is," returned Michael, pointing to a paper on his desk, "Mr. Townsend made a copy for me when I was in London, and I referred to it while those men were here. There is no doubt that if that fellow can prove himself the son of Nicholas Tresidder, the property belongs to him, and not to me. You see it is not a mere entail, but a strict settlement upon the eldest male issue."

"Born in lawful wedlock," continued the Marquis, reading from the same paper. "Well, we do not

know yet that this man, even should he really be a son of Nicholas, is the eldest, and what is more to your purpose, that he is a legitimate son at all."

"The lawyer spoke of his wife," put in Michael, with a shake of the head, "and of the old man's grief at her loss and so on, and if you remember, my Lord, he read the copy of the inscription upon his tomb in Highgate Cemetery."

"I remember that he did; but I also remember that he did not read any marriage certificate. He said they were married on a certain day; depend upon it, if he could, he would have told us in what church, and by whom.

"Until they can prove that, it is

nothing to you if he be the son of fifty Nicholas Tresidders."

The Marquis' regained cheerfulness of tone could not fail to inspirit his host, and the more they talked, they talked the matter over with this fresh light upon it, the more probable a solution of the difficulty it seemed to be.

Mr. Townsend, also, who came down from London two days afterwards, took this view with such determined strength of opinion, that Michael Tresidder recovered much of his former light-hearted humour, and entered into Bertie's various projects of entertainments, without bestowing very frequent thoughts upon the skeletons cupboarded at the "Tresidder Arms."

They were not, however, idle, and talked of their object and rights to every one who would listen. Unfortunately for them, not many were willing to do so.

The Tresidders of Portruan were greatly beloved by all classes of their neighbours, not only, or principally because they were large landowners, nor even for their ancient race (highly as the Cornish people, both small and great, owing partly to their strong clannish feeling, value old blood), but because the name had for the last twenty years been associated with all that was kind and neighbourly. Everybody knew that the present Squire was certainly the true representative of Lady Eveline and the Colonel, and nobody cared to inquire further,

especially when Michael was at this very time entertaining gentle and simple with such liberal hospitality.

A few, only, were gained over by the romantic interest attaching to a long lost heir, and insisted upon the likeness, of which Burrows had, of course, carefully made the most. "Anybody can see the gentleman's one of the family, sure enough," they would say at the morning gossip of village notables in front of the carpenter's shop. "Why, 'tis the 'Old Squire' himself, just as he is painted up at the House!"

But the remark fell rather flat after it was met one day by Farmer Trewithen blurting out in his downright way,

"Don't ye get trying to ride your

horse with that saddle, or you'll may be get a tumble. 'Old Squire' have been cold in the church-yard many a day, and bye-gones is bye-gones, I say; but he was a wild youngster, as I've heard old father say many a time, and there may have been by-blows of his in twenty parishes if truth was known."

This outspoken rejoinder came of course to the hearing of Burrows and Philip, and made them furious; but they could not prevent its having the effect of turning public opinion still more strongly against them, to such an extent, that they soon went off in despair of picking up any further information at Portruan.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMONG the guests who were bidden to the grand ball, which was to usher in the new year, and to help on greatly Tresidder's chance of success at any future election for the county, were, as a matter of course, the inmates of Penaluna Vicarage. Carrie had looked forward during many weeks to this first opportunity of assisting at the pleasant pastimes of

grown up people, and took care that, as they were to sleep at the Manor, she and her father should set off early enough, to allow the old pony plenty of time for the long thirty mile drive, which they were to break by a luncheon half way at a friend's house.

The old lady and Ruth had also been invited; but the first had declared that she could not think of keeping a room from taking in some younger guest; while the last, who was painfully averse to the notion of accepting Michael's hospitality, was able easily to excuse herself, since the ill effects of her accident at the Quarry had as yet by no means passed off.

The two ladies were sitting together in the quiet house after the others'

departure. Ruth, though still much of an invalid, had come downstairs early this morning, in order to witness her pupil's delight and excited start, and was now apparently occupied in sketching a pretty peep of the old castle on Penaluna Head, which was visible with the rocky glen leading to it from one of the windows of the drawing-room. Mrs. Gilbert, at a little distance in a great easy-chair by the fireside, was checking off on a long list all the names of those to whom she had already given Christmas gifts; but the kind eyes were continually raised over her spectacles to watch the pale and sad face.

"Would it not help you, my dear, to speak out with me, now that we have the house to ourselves?" she

said at last. "I am sure that something has been weighing upon your mind last night and this morning. There is ten o'clock striking, and though we have been here ever since they left, nearly an hour ago, I don't think you have drawn a dozen lines."

Ruth started slightly, and as she drew her pencil and brushes towards her again, looked up at the old lady with a wistful expression, as if on the point of yielding to her request; but after a minute's hesitation she shook her head sadly, and only said,

"Thank you, I know well how kind you are, but there are some troubles we must bear silently, and it is a good many years now since I have been forced to learn how to do so."

"Do not talk of my kindness, Ruth; the word is too formal, when you know well that I regard you as a daughter of my own."

Mrs. Gilbert spoke in a tone of some pique, for like all warm-hearted people, she was quickly hurt at any want of full return to her own affection. She did not take to every one at first sight, as some amiable and shallow people do, but where she did love at all, she loved thoroughly.

Ruth noticed the tone, and was pained by it. Crossing the room to the old lady's chair, she bent down to kiss her, as she answered,

"I do know that well. You have been as a mother to me, and can imagine what exquisite happiness and peace my life with you here has been.

But yet I cannot tell you what perplexes me—I cannot."

Weak in body as she still was from illness, Ruth had been so long accustomed to restrain her feelings, that her great distress did not find relief in tears, but only showed itself in the increased tenderness of her voice.

As she stood behind Mrs. Gilbert's chair, she leant her head upon the back and covered her face with one hand, while the fingers of the other pressed nervously against the arm of the chair. Repenting in a moment of her feeling of pique, the old lady clasped the girl's hand in her own as she said gravely.

"Never mind, my dear, tell me only what you feel right. I am old

enough to say, what I think to you, and of you, and it may make you happier to hear it, now that you have evidently some great trouble. From the first day you came to us I liked you, and was sure that our child would be taught to grow up a truthful and courageous woman. But during your illness, brought on by that accident at the Quarry, I have had much more opportunity of judging, and have come not only to love, but to respect you sincerely. Your life has exposed you to more of painful experience than we women are, happily, often forced to bear; the strength of your character has been in a certain sense an additional danger, but I am convinced that you have come through the ordeal nobly."

Mrs. Gilbert, though always kind and motherly, was so little given to making long speeches, and Ruth was so little accustomed to hear herself praised, that the effect now was very great.

She continued to keep her head bent down until the other's voice stopped, but when she raised it there was a gleam of bright happiness struggling with the old sad and wistful expression. Twining her arm round Mrs. Gilbert's neck, she kissed her again, and as their eyes met and looked steadily and lovingly into each other she said. "Thank you for those dear words. They have given me deep pleasure. I cannot satisfy myself that the step I have resolved upon is certainly right, and yet I feel

that I must take it. You have trusted me hitherto, and what you say makes me hope that you will continue to trust me, even should my course of action appear strange."

Then, as if afraid that her strength of purpose would not hold out, she restrained herself by a strong effort, and only saying as she clasped Mrs. Gilbert's hands in a loving grasp. "Oh! let nothing ever persuade you that I am ungrateful, or that I do not return your love," Ruth Turnwell hastened from the room.

In fact it was necessary either to give up, or at once to set about carrying out the plan upon which she had resolved, and which was nothing less than to separate herself

again from the home in which she had found such affection and shelter, and to recommence her struggle with the world.

The motive that prompted her was in reality her secret love for Michael Tresidder, but working in the complex manner that such an affection often does when forced down within a great heart, and unable to show itself openly.

Under such circumstances, the moral sense is often strangely distorted; and, moreover, when wishing to keep a passion concealed, clever women not unfrequently act with the same want of sagacity as the ostrich, who hides her head in the sand and thinks her whole body invisible.

Yesterday Ruth had found the cer-

tificate of her mother's marriage by mere accident. Falling from her father's trembling fingers on his death-bed, it had slipped into the old violin, and had rested there quietly until his daughter had chanced to turn the instrument in a particular position, as she sat in her own room and thought of him, and of the sweet old melodies he used to play upon it.

Just after his death Ruth had put the fiddle tenderly away in its case, and though frequently she had opened the box to look at this old friend, she had never happened to take it out before until that morning.

Her own interest was so little excited by her brother's claim to Portruan, that she had not cared to inquire

into its foundation, or formed any opinion as to its probable success, until this little strip of old and yellow paper fluttered out upon the floor, and testified in due form that on Christmas day 1839, Nicholas Tresidder had been married to Ellen Borlase, at the very church which stood on the hill behind Penaluna Vicarage, and which she could see at that moment from her window.

While with the Gilberts, she had naturally learnt some particulars of the Portruan family history, and connecting them now with her father's last conversation, she could hardly fail to conclude that her brother Philip was the rightful owner of the estate. If so, Michael Tresidder, whom

in fact she had loved since their first meeting, ought now to be, and must, if she produced this certificate, and came forward as a witness to the finding of the letters, actually become a beggar.

As it happened, Michael was a high-minded man likely to use the advantages of wealth, and high position for the good of others and to his own honour; while Philip was dissipated, grasping, and cruel, and was looked upon by his sister as the direct cause of their father's death.

But if love had not blinded her judgment, she would have quickly enough perceived that the question of merit had nothing at all to do with the question of right; and that she was

putting the man she wished to benefit into a false position. Had Philip been ten times worse than he was, Michael would be none the less virtually, though unconsciously, a robber, while he held possession of another man's estate.

As to the certificate of marriage, Ruth Turnwell fell into the mistake natural enough to a woman who was entirely ignorant of law, and who was little versed in social matters. It did not strike her that there was scarcely any probability of her brother's failing to discover at some time or other the place of his father's marriage, and that then another certificate was easily to be procured. She regarded this identical strip of faded paper as all-important;

and though she would not destroy a document which affected her own mother's character, she determined to keep its existence absolutely a secret.

Of course she was wrong. All the sophistry of love could not entirely prevent her from having some consciousness that this was so. Of course, too, the world would think her wrong doing greatly aggravated by the fact, that Philip, who was intended to suffer by it, was, whether good or bad, certainly her brother. But luckily for the so-called world, there are few among the comfortable people who compose it, who have had the ties of natural affection subjected to such an unnatural strain: while though it cannot justify the act, it must

excite some compassion for the doer, that she was imposing bitter pain upon herself.

There was no merit in disregarding her own interest, for it never occurred to her that much pecuniary advantage might, and some pleasant social position must, accrue to her as the sister of a rich man; but there was need for an effort of will, heroic in its proportion, although faulty in conception, in order now to tear herself out of that friendly soil in, and through which so many fibres from her strong heart had already taken clinging root.

Having once resolved to break the ties of affection which bound her to the Gilberts, Ruth Turnwell was not dismayed, in the manner

that most women of her age would have been, by the physical discomforts which she would again have to encounter in the friendlessness of a solitary life. Unfortunately, just at the present time, her strength was much weakened by illness; but health would, as she thought, soon return; and then, as she knew already, she would be able to fight her own battle in the world.

She had some hours since made all arrangements to start on her journey in such a way that the Penaluna family should be unable to know her ultimate destination. The nearest railway station was twenty miles away at Bodmin, and it would have been impossible to get there with her luggage, small as that was, without exciting remark in such a thinly

peopled district as this. She meant, therefore, to inform Mrs. Gilbert of her sudden intention to leave them; but to do so in such a way, that there would be little opportunity for the kind questioning which, as a matter of course, would result from the old lady's surprise at the news.

There is no direct line of communication between Bodmin and Penaluna and except tourists during the summer months, there are scarcely a dozen people, in the course of the year, who go from the one place to the other.

Luckily, however, a chance postchaise had come to the village the day before, and the driver was glad enough, instead of returning quite empty, to accept a very small payment for taking Ruth and her boxes. These

had been already wheeled up to the Vicarage gate, and it wanted but a few minutes to the hour when the carriage would pass.

Counting by weeks, it was but a short time that she had occupied the pleasant room, round which her eyes now wandered with a last lingering look; but, short as it was, and burdened as much of it had been by physical suffering, it yet embraced nearly all the hours of mental happiness which her grown up life had known.

She felt that it was like parting from a sympathising friend to leave this pretty cheerful shelter, with its comfortable, though unpretending furniture, and the pleasant breeze just fluttering the window blinds, as it blew on this

mild winter's morning softly down the valley landward, and, up over the great church-crowned down, out to sea.

She loved, too, the glimmer of the small stream at the bottom of the garden, and had been used to fancy that its course somewhat resembled that of her own life. Rising in a sheltered nook of the hills, quiet as the Hampstead cottage, necessity had soon taught the water to fight its own way among the rough stones of the moor, and then be content to wander through barren fields with no tree to give it shelter.

Like herself, the brook had found repose at Penaluna Vicarage, for it rested peacefully enough in two or three broad ponds in the garden; but

destiny would not allow either of them a long respite. The water was soon obliged to quit its pool, and after a second fight for a few hundred yards among the rocks of the valley, to dash over the edge of a precipice in the Castle cove, and be lost altogether in the sea. In her present mood, Ruth would have welcomed any mode, except the cowardly recourse of suicide, by which the struggling life into which she was again about to plunge could have ended as rapidly.

There is no misery more great than that of uncertainty and hopelessness as to the future. A woman who may be capable of encountering it, by her own voluntary act, may yet be unable to hide some evidence in her

face of the sharpness of pain which the effort causes.

Mrs. Gilbert had, after her companion left the room, continued to worry herself with conjectures as to the cause of the girl's trouble, and the possibility of alleviating it. But when the door opened, and Ruth again appeared, ready dressed for her journey, her old friend was more than ever shocked by the exceeding paleness of the features, and the expression of intense suffering which marked them. Before she could speak, the girl had come up to her, and spoke in a voice that was made harsh and grating by the great effort at control necessary.

"I am come to wish you good-bye, for I am going away."

"Going away!" repeated Mrs. Gil-

bert, in great astonishment, "Why, my dear? You look more fit to be in your bed. Besides, what can be the reason of this? Where are you going?"

Her first surprise was giving way to annoyance. Ruth's conduct appeared so extraordinary, that the other naturally grew displeased as she realised it.

"So, this was the trouble you could not mention to me an hour ago. Well, you know, I suppose, your own business best, and must do as you choose; but I cannot understand it at all. Besides, how in the world are you going?"

"Oh! that is arranged," said Ruth, glad to avoid the main question, and explaining how the fly was, at this moment, ready for her.

"You said just now, that you loved —you respected me. Try to do so still. Try to keep your faith in me, although I can only tell you that it is necessary for me to go away. I must not say why or where."

Then afraid of losing all command of her feelings, if she once trusted herself to talk to this dear friend, she put out both her hands to say good-bye.

Painfully vexed, but unable, especially in her son's absence, to decide on what more could be done to stop the girl's departure, Mrs. Gilbert took one of Ruth's hands, and, as she did so, could not, in spite of her displeasure, resist rising from the chair to embrace and kiss her tenderly as she said:

"I do not like mysteries—I never

did. If people are ashamed to speak of a thing, why do they do it? But you are different from any other woman; and although you will leave me, I cannot let you go, without telling you that my best wishes must always follow you."

Ruth Turnwell was almost conquered by this burst of feeling; but, with difficulty, she retained her composure, and pressing the soft old fingers that still held her own, to her lips, she kept them there for a second or two. Then not trusting herself to speak, she dropped the hand gently, and with a last look of intense affection and sorrow, turned and left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

"OW beautiful a scene this is, Mr. Tresidder," said Lady Margaret Charteris, as she and Michael stood during the pauses of a waltz at the upper end of the Hall at Portruan, "the quantity of light brings out every spot of gilding or colour on these dark oak panels, or in the recesses of that grand timber roof with wonderfully fine effect."

It was the night of the New Year's Ball, and the dais on the edge of which they stood being raised two or three steps above the level of the floor, they commanded a good general view of the noble room filled with the gay crowd of dancers.

"Yes, it is pretty," replied Michael, "thanks though in great measure to your, and my cousin's charming arrangement of all these flowers. I am afraid you have had rather hard work."

"Oh! no, Bertie and the other gentlemen did all the work; we only looked on, and made a suggestion now and then. But there was some pleasure in helping to decorate a house like this; London rooms, however good they may be, are so

thoroughly conventional, and so much like one another that it is difficult to get enthusiastic about them."

"Yes, I agree with you as to that; but you have balls at Healey, do you not? and the gallery there is very fine."

"Fine, yes; even magnificent, but too straightforward to be either romantic or interesting;" said Lady Margaret, smiling, "our balls are pretty enough, but it is more owing to the upholsterer's and gardener's good taste than to our own."

There were, as is usual in the western counties, a considerable number of pretty women among the crowd, but not one who could compare with, much less rival his present fair partner; and Michael, as he returned

with her to the throng of dancers, noticed the looks of admiration which followed her on all sides.

Many of the guests were almost strangers to their host, and of course ignorant of the engagement between his lovely companion and Lord Ellerton. Seeing his evident delight in her society, they at once concluded that Portruan was likely soon to find a mistress, and many were the gossiping remarks made about the probable successor to Lady Eveline Tresidder's popularity in the county, as well as to her position.

Michael indeed experienced no moments of pleasure greater than those which he spent by her side, and though he was too honest to supplant his friend, could not fail to

recognise what extreme happiness it would be to change places with him, and gain the right to love and cherish this charming girl as his own.

Later in the evening, they had been dancing together again, and were resting in the Library, which, with other rooms, opened from the Hall. Lady Margaret was tired, and for a little while they sat almost in silence.

Michael was happy enough in watching the long eyelashes almost resting on her soft cheek as she sat looking down on the bunch of flowers she held in one hand, while the fingers of the other played with one of the blossoms.

Then as the music began to play again, and they were left almost alone

in the room, she spoke with some shyness and hesitation.

"You are George's friend, and will let me speak to you almost as a sister would, will you not?"

Her brilliant eyes were raised to his face for an instant, but dropped again at once as they met the earnest gaze she found to be fixed upon her; while a faint blush tinged her fair face.

"Those wretched men who are at the village inn, and were here the other morning, cannot seriously injure you, I hope; even if one of them is, as he says, in some way related to you."

Michael's face became grave as this spectre, which, for the time he had forgotten, was again raised before him.

"If, as he says, the man is related to me at all I am simply a pauper, and he is the owner of everything here," he said very seriously; but shaking off his momentary depression, he then continued more in his usual tone. "It is very kind of you to feel so much interest in my fortune, Lady Margaret, and the knowledge that you do so must always be a pleasure to me whatever may happen. It is quite true, however, that," here his voice became grave again, "if the man is what he claims to be, I shall be absolutely a beggar."

That he actually meant what he said, was so evident, and its full import was so much worse than anything she had supposed possible, that Lady Margaret remained silent

for a little while, unable to find words which should express all the sympathy she felt, and yet be such as might properly be spoken.

"But I do not believe that he is any relation at all to the Tresidders," continued Michael, seeing her hesitation, and half guessing its cause; "and therefore you must not vex yourself by grieving about me. I am only anxious that the affair should be finally settled. It is difficult to enter with good heart into the numerous things which I should like to do here, until this bother is fairly out of the way. Besides, if there should be a Dissolution, and I could otherwise get into the House, as Bertie thinks, of course I could not possibly stand while there was any

uncertainty as to my right to be here."

"Certainly not," replied Lady Margaret, "and yet it would be very provoking to lose so good a chance. I suppose there are not many positions in the world equal in point of solid comfort to that of an English country gentleman with a good estate, but to even the most indolent it must be a great addition to the interest of his life to have something to do with public affairs."

"Yes, indeed," said Michael. "For myself, were it not a question of absolute poverty, and had I not grown up in this old place, and become linked to it and the people here by so many associations, I do not think that I should regret the loss of position. A

cup that is all sugar is apt to become mawkish; and I am inclined to think, that the man, who is working to make his own pedestal, spends his life more happily than the man who finds himself already mounted. I know, in my old Oxford days, it used to give me so much pleasure to pull in a race, that I never cared whether our boat won or not."

"George would not agree with you, Mr. Tresidder, as much as I do," replied Lady Margaret. "He likes well enough to be at work, but it must be as captain of the ship, not as one of the crew. However, even I cannnot hope that you should be forced to test the sincerity of your own preference for equality." As she said this with some earnestness, her young

cousin 'Fanny' Ellerton entered the room, and interrupted them by calling out:

"Here you are then after all, Margaret. I have been hunting throughout the place for you. The end even of this glorious ball has come, and you promised to dance the grand wind up with me. A cotillon would be much better fun, but I suppose old Sir Roger de Coverley is more appropriate to what Beaumont would call 'The spirit of these antique halls.' Of course you must come and lead off, Michael, with the biggest swell you can find."

"All right, Fanny. I am quite agreeable, especially as the biggest swell as you call it, happens to be your mother. Lady Ferndale will not think it a bore I hope."

All three returned to the hall together, and in a few minutes the long lines of the old-fashioned country dance were stretched from end to end of the level part of the room, from the dais at the top, to the carved screen supporting the minstrels' gallery at the bottom.

A few of the very old people only looked on from their sofas, while all the rest of the party stood up facing each other, from Carrie Gilbert and Dick Trecarrels the Eton boy, to Lord Sunderland and Lady Grace Pendarves, mother of one of the members, and in a pleasant feminine way, chief patriarch of the county.

The Irish cousins had persuaded the master to bring his hounds to a favourite meet close to Portruan next

morning, and therefore a good many more of the guests than usual managed to assemble at rather an early hour round the breakfast table; where much amusement was caused by a gorgeous account of the "Tresidder festivities," as they were called, in one of the local newspapers. Bertie Cunninghame was reading this out in a theatrical manner, and of course exaggerating the expressions of one or two speeches which the young "Squire" had made at the tenant's dinner, when Michael entered with a bundle of letters.

"Here's a note, which has been sent over from Tregarthen to you," he said to Gilbert, "and here," to Bertie Cunninghame, "is something to keep you quiet," as he handed him

a packet with the feathers of the Carlton on its seal.

"Thanks, but you are not in pink;" said his cousin, "I thought you were coming out with us this morning. The populace will be nicely disappointed if the hero of the meet stays at home."

"Oh! you will represent me," replied Michael, "with much greater effect, both among the farmers and the mine captains. Old Carmenow, my steward, said only yesterday—

"'He's a tidy sort of young chap, Squire, that Mr. Cunninghame. If we only had he in the West country long enough, we might make a brave little something out of him.'"

"Much obliged for the honour, I

am sure," said Cunninghame, with a comic bow; "but happily my lot has been cast a little nearer to the civilized world. If I come across Mr. Carmenow on his old grey cob in the hunting-field to-day, I have half a mind to ride straight at him, just as he is dismounting to clamber over a stone hedge with his arm on the horse's shoulder, in the queer fashion you call riding to hounds in this benighted part of the country."

Tresidder took the newspaper from which the other had been reading, but merely looking carelessly at the paragraphs about himself, he turned it over and ran his eyes through the other pages: while doing so his attention was arrested by the fresh mention of his own name, and he read

with more contempt than astonishment, an advertisement headed in large letters, "One Hundred Pounds Reward." The paragraph itself was worded as follows:

"To parish clerks, clergymen, and others, the above reward will be given to anyone furnishing information, which may lead to the discovery of the Church where the marriage ceremony, mentioned below, was performed between the 24th of December, 1839, and the 10th of January, 1840. The bride's surname is not known, but her Christian name, or one of them, was Ellen. The bridegroom is believed to have been married in the names of Nicholas Turnwell, but he may have used his real surname, Tresidder."

"So Lord Sunderland and Mr.

Townsend are perfectly right," thought Michael, "Master Philip is quite ignorant as to the most important part of his case."

Just then Gilbert came up to him with an open note, of which the contents had evidently perplexed and troubled him.

"We must go home at once after breakfast, I fear. My dear mother is in a sad state of worry, and though she does not ask me to come back, I can see she wants me very much."

"She is not ill, I hope," said Michael.

"No, I hope not," replied Gilbert, "at least she says nothing about that. But you remember Miss Turnwell, that nice governess of Carrie's,

who was hurt at the quarry while you were with us?"

"Turnwell, Miss Turnwell!" said his host, struck by the name as being that which he had just read in the advertisement. "Yes, I remember her very well. What has happened to her? I thought she was nearly well again, now."

"So she is, but my mother says that she is gone away. I cannot understand it at all, as we only left home four-and-twenty hours ago, and nothing had been said about her leaving us then. We all liked her so thoroughly, and I think my mother most of all. Poor old mother, she seems greatly put out; and I fancy wants me to come and take some step. I am very sorry, too, but what

can I do? if this Miss Turnwell chooses to leave us, I cannot stop her."

While his friend was speaking, Michael could not get rid of his misgiving that this woman's sudden departure was in some way connected with the advertisement. First there was the identity of the name. Then Burrows had spoken of a sister of Philip's as nursing their father, and of the father's death in a miserable lodging in London. He himself knew, by the incident of Cavendish Square, that the governess of Penaluna had, only a few months since, a father alive, but very ill in a wretched house in Compton Street. While he was pretty sure that the man had died before the daughter left London.

He communicated his doubts to Gilbert, and showed him the paragraph.

The Vicar was thoroughly astonished, and could not help feeling a great addition to his former secret uneasiness about the missing girl.

"And yet," he said, "it is quite impossible, as you say, that she can be in league with a blackguard like this man at the village inn. I hope for both her sake and yours the connexion between the names has misled you. That woman's face was often sad enough, but if eyes are any index of character she is thoroughly to be trusted."

To this Michael warmly assented. "If she is that man's sister, she must know something of the claim

he is making, and is gone away of her own accord because she feels bound to support her brother, and cannot bear to remain still with your friends; or else she has been forced away by him to prevent her exposing his imposition, and in that case there is no knowing to what cruel restraint she may be subjected."

Mrs. Gilbert had not entered into much explanation in her note, so that her son had nothing to guide his conjectures as to the circumstances of Ruth's departure from Penaluna, which have been related in the last chapter. But he became greatly anxious to reach home, and much to Carrie's regret, they drove away from Portruan as soon as breakfast was ended. Michael came to the door to see

them off; and as he shook hands, begged his friend to obtain by to-morrow, if at all possible to gather it, some further information as to Ruth.

The rest of the day passed quickly enough in various occupations; many of the other and less intimate guests left the Manor during it, as also did Lord Sunderland, so that by dinner time the party was reduced to the Ferndales, the Kilfenoras and Bertie Cunninghame only, besides the Squire himself.

Of these, the Irish relations were to leave on the following day, and pay two or three visits on their way up to Holyhead; while Lady Ferndale had been attracted by Mr. Gilbert's description of the grandeur of a rocky sea-coast during the season

of winter storms, and had somewhat imperiously persuaded her whole party to accompany her for a week to Penaluna village.

They were to drive there in Michael's drag on the following day, and to be quartered in the only building capable of holding them. There was one good new house joining the old village inn, and this the Vicar had borrowed for them from the absent owners, his own vicarage being quite too small to accommodate half of the Countess's rather numerous retinue. Tresidder himself was to stay with the clergyman.

Fortunately they had a fine day for their long drive, and everyone was delighted by the novel character of their road, so unlike any they

had ever seen in England. The chief part ran along wide open downs, with, on the one side, the great purple-shadowed plain stretching far away to those huge giants of the moor, the Cornish mountains, Brownwilly and Roughtor; while on the other, an endless expanse of green ocean spread out from the coast-line close below them, till it became blue in the distance, and at length melted without any perceptible point of change into the sky at the horizon.

The arrival of the well-appointed drag with its team of bright bays, smart grooms, and load of distinguished-looking passengers, warmly protected by their rich furs, made no slight sensation in the little village. The happy man who was

wealthy enough to own all this splendour, and yet was skilful enough to drive his spirited horses himself into the bargain, seemed like a God to the children of the quarrymen, or sailors, who, during the holidays, considered the street as their playground and undisputed property.

When the visitors had been deposited at their own door; it was a difficult choice for each small mortal to make, whether to stay and watch the wonderful spectacle of unharnessing and making comfortable those grand horses, or to follow at a respectful distance their still grander master as he walked down to the Vicarage.

Michael was in high spirits from the excitement of the long drive with Lady

Margaret by his side upon the box; for Lady Ferndale had, at the last moment, thought it more prudent to establish herself and daughter snugly on the second seat, with her husband and Bertie to keep them in on either side. He only laughed at his band of satellites, and dismissed them with a good-natured nod at the Vicarage door, as Gilbert came out to meet him. Before, however, the clatter of their footsteps was well out of hearing up the hill, Tresidder had learnt that he was probably as little burdened with wealth as they were.

Gilbert, in answer to his cheery question, "Well, any more news?" took him into the study, as he answered,

"Nothing of Miss Turnwell since she

went, but in this book which she left for my daughter, she has written Carrie's name above her own, Ruth Ellen Turnwell."

"Ellen! that is the name in the advertisement, is it not?" exclaimed Michael.

"Yes. I see you are struck by it as I was; but I have more to tell you. My old clerk, eager to try for that promised reward, has this morning examined our old registers, and not an hour ago he has brought this volume," pointing to a large folio on the table. "He has found that which he sought, and I have to give him a copy of this entry."

Michael's eyes followed the Vicar's movements, as while speaking he had opened the book, and pointed with his

finger to certain lines. These contained nothing less than the actual words, from which the marriage certificate now in Ruth's possession had been copied.

CHAPTER VII.

FTER the question of the marriage was thus set at rest, Tresidder regarded his case as practically lost. Indeed, his friends had some difficulty in persuading him to let the law take its ordinary course, and to retain his possession until the verdict was given against him at the trial, which could not come on before the Spring Assizes.

He had in his heart believed the greater part of Philip's story when it was first related to him, and though his action had been guided by the advice of those who appeared more competent judges than he felt himself to be, his own presentiment had never been thoroughly got rid of. Now that the weakest link in the chain of evidence was shown to be true, he could not believe that any of the others would be found faulty.

The most difficult part of the matter to understand, was the conduct of Ruth Turnwell. Of course, he knew nothing of her well-founded antipathy to her brother, but even without such knowledge it was impossible to believe that two persons of such diametrically

opposite characters would be acting together. Indeed, if they were, the girl who had lived so many weeks as an inmate of his greatest friend's house, and gained their entire confidence, was far worse than her brother.

He certainly looked like a villain, but there was no villany in his open attempt to recover what rightfully belonged to him; while she appeared to be all that was highminded and outspoken, and yet had been possibly playing a part all the time. The clergyman had altered his former opinion and was now inclined to condemn her; but Tresidder believed himself to have acquired some considerable judgment of physiognomy, and the more suspicious her line of conduct appeared,

the more convinced he was that there must be some other explanation, for that she was incapable of such meanness. In this he was strongly supported by Mrs. Gilbert, who was distressed beyond measure at the turn events had taken, but quite constant in her belief in Ruth's uprightness.

Their favourable view was strengthened by finding, on careful inquiry, that the girl had gone straight back to London from Bodmin Station. They lost all trace of her there, but they could not hear of any communication between her and Philip, who still remained at Portruan; indeed they guessed rightly enough that the R. T. who was informed every morning in the second column of the *Times* that

"The trial would take place at Bodmin during the second week of April," and who was requested, "to communicate with P. T., at the Tresidder Arms, Portruan, Cornwall," must be Carrie's late governess.

The Ferndales had prolonged their stay at Penaluna, having for a week or two more no engagements to necessitate their return northward, and wishing that Tresidder, to whom all the party had grown to be much attached, should not feel himself to be in any manner deserted by his former friends.

After a day or two, Michael regained much of his former pleasant manner, and joined them in their rides or walks about the downs inland, or on the bold

coast. Thinking of the matter would not shorten the time, which must elapse before his sentence was finally pronounced.

He reflected that he had done wrong, if wrong it was proved to be, in perfect innocence: and that he had nothing of which to be ashamed. If the worse came, it was but to put into practice the life of work on the footing of equality he had in thought often envied, as the more noble life for a man with energy and sound health.

Lady Margaret did not like to refer again to the subject of his trouble; she felt that circumstances had made it now too delicate a matter for discussion; but she could not prevent her eyes from looking at him more

kindly, and her voice from taking a softer, almost a tender tone.

Who that has been to Penaluna does not know the famous Pack of Harriers? Put out to walk in the summer at the neighbouring farms, in the winter they are kept in a kennel in the Castle ravine, which is more convenient for the old huntsman, whose cottage is close by built into the side of a bare hill, than it is luxurious for the poor hounds themselves. Neither man nor dogs are precisely of the cut, nor turned out with quite the fastidious nicety of the "Shires;" but such as they are, they manage to break up a fox now and then, among holes, and precipices, that would have made old Davis's hair stand on end: and in an artistic point of view, their

huntsman's ancient pink and older grey pony harmonize well with the rocks amongst which they scramble.

There had been a meet one morning for Lord Ferndale's especial benefit, and of course most of his party had attended it. The night had been stormy, and there was a strong wind still, which threatened to grow into more than half a gale as the day advanced. Michael Tresidder and Lady Margaret were riding home together. She seemed to delight in wild weather, and never looked more beautiful than when, as now, the wind had flushed her cheeks, and was tossing about the golden ripples of her hair. As they came out upon a piece of open down, Michael said:

"Come up here to the right, if you wish to see what an angry sea is like, and you can trust your horse to stand steady."

Lady Margaret only answered by turning her horse in the direction suggested, and raising her hand to make him canter up the slope. Her companion stopped her in horror, for the hill only continued to within a few hundred yards of where they stood, and there ended in a sheer precipice against the foot of which the waves dashed at all times of the tide.

Then as a tremendous gust of wind nearly carried their horses off their legs, and the animals grew frightened, Tresidder said—

"It will be better to dismount, and walk to the edge while this sheep

lad will take charge of our horses, and keep them a little sheltered in the narrow lane below."

They soon reached the top, and found in this exposed situation the force of the wind so great, that Lady Margaret was glad to cling for support to the granite post, which with a few stones round its base formed a sort of small cairn.

The point on which they stood forms the Western horn of Trebarwith Strand, and from it they could see a magnificent expanse of water leaping and foaming in Port Isaac Bay on their left, and far away out into the main Bristol Channel in front of them. The wind was from the North West, and the waves seemed to fly before it as they

dashed against the long line of rocky shore.

About a mile out to sea, a little to their right, was an isolated gull-rock. This is a lofty mass enough, but as they looked, they saw every few minutes a deluge of white foam and spray wash completely over it; as one of the great rollers, which out-topped at regular intervals all the other waves, came roaring by, and hurled itself against the island. As he ran his eye round the line of the horizon, jagged and broken by the height of the waves, Michael Tresidder was startled to see in the distance, though on this side of Pentire Point, which was the further boundary of the Bay of Port Isaac, a small vessel attempting to beat up the Channel.

Pointing her out to Lady Margaret, who had some difficulty in making her out in the broken waste of water, he said with the excitement natural to a man who had seen something of sea life, and knew its dangers:

"What can have brought her here? it is perfect madness not to have run for Padstow harbour, bad as that is to enter in rough weather. There is not another shelter within fifty miles, and with the wind from its present quarter they can only beat up the Channel by a miracle: while, if it gets round more to the northward, as seems likely, it is a hundred to one that they do not weather Penaluna Head."

Screening his eyes with his hand,

he continued to watch the little ship, as she tossed restlessly about, forgetting for several minutes even Lady Margaret in his anxiety. Then remembering her, and looking angry, as energetic men often do, when they see something going wrong, which they are without the power to remedy, he turned away, and walked quickly with her down to their horses. She saw from his great anxiety that something was wrong, and scarcely a word more was spoken as they hurried back to the village. Then as he assisted her to dismount, he said,

"I beg your pardon, I fear I have behaved like a bear; but the danger those poor fellows out there are in, puts everything else out of my head. There is only one thing to be done,

and not much time to be lost in doing it."

By this time he was again in his saddle. As she looked up in surprise at seeing him prepared to start afresh, he answered her thoughts.

"I must ride at once to Boscastle; there is, I am almost sure, an apparatus there for saving men from a wreck. In such a sea as we shall have in an hour or two, the new life-boat here would never get out of the Cove."

Tresidder's high-bred hunter had never swept across the smoothest grass field at a better pace, than that at which he was now forced to gallop along the three miles of stony road, up hill and down, which lies between Penaluna and Boscastle.

The wind was increasing perceptibly in force every moment, and as the vessel, when they first saw her, could not have been more than nine miles away, she would in another hour, or little more, if his fears proved to be right, be abreast of the great headland which was the point of most danger.

At Boscastle he found the coast-guard men on the alert, although from their look-out they had as yet seen nothing. Their post was rather more distant from the vessel's course, but had it not been so, there would have been little to wonder at, in so small a craft escaping their observation among the broken crests, in such a sea as that of this day. A stray gleam of sun had chanced to catch her small

speck of sail at the moment that Michael looked with Lady Margaret from the point at Trebarwith; while just at the time there was, also, one of those breaks of clear sky, that often occur on a cloudy but dry day, when the wind is high.

The cart containing the coil of strong hawser to which the life-escape would be attached, was all in readiness with the small rope and bundle of rockets by which the apparatus was fired from the shore to the vessel in distress.

At various points along this rock-bound coast similar materials are deposited, and should a ship be observed on a dangerous course, the cart is immediately sent out and follows her as near the shore line as

possible, until she comes within the limits of the coast-guard station, which then takes up the pursuit of rescue, and, if necessary, hands it on to another in its turn.

Lady Margaret had warned the people of the village, and by the time that Michael returned with the coast-guard, a crowd of men and women were collected on the cliffs at the back of the churchyard, from which poor Ruth Turnwell had some weeks since admired the scene under a very different aspect. Penaluna Island resembled more the great powerful animal, half lion, half sphynx, than ever; as it preserved its calm couching posture unmoved by the furious water which buried its fore paws, and raging up against the

bluff of black slate, which formed the monster's chest, dashed every now and again high over the lofty crest.

Tresidder had calculated his time rightly, his return was not any too soon. Leaving the cart in charge of one man near the village, at a road from which the shore, either east or west of the Island, was equally accessible, he and the others joined the group. Lady Margaret ran down the hill towards him, her face as pale as death, and spoke hurriedly.

"They say it is a yacht, Mr. Tressider, and that she is driving in shore every instant; God grant it is not your 'Ariel' with George on board! I have not dared to speak of my horrible fear to Lord Ferndale."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Michael, "and yet it can hardly be as you suspect. He is coming home in her now I think; but would never have risked the Bristol Channel instead of making for Falmouth."

And yet her fear was true. When they had reached the summit of the cliff, they stood on such a height that the vessel, which was now only about three-quarters of a mile from the shore, could be seen distinctly. She rose gallantly above the waves, but was evidently quite incapable of beating up against the wind, which had by this time increased to a gale, and though still making headway, was drifting continually nearer and nearer towards

the iron bound shore which stretched all along to leeward.

To a seaman's eye the lines of the saucy 'Ariel' were unmistakeable, though the gallant little schooner retained little now, as she was straining and tossing in her fierce battle with wind and water, of the daintiness of her general appearance. A deep gasp of horror came up from Michael's breast, as he snatched the glass from the coast-guardsman's hand, and examined the figures which were clearly to be seen on the deck. One of them was undoubtedly that of his friend Lord Ellerton; and as he recognised him, the lingering hope which he had formed, that, at least, this man had been landed at some earlier port during

their voyage, was rendered impossible. Turning to the Vicar he whispered huskily.

"For God's sake get Lord Ferndale away! his son is one of the men on board, and in a very few minutes he will see him even without a glass. Take him down on the plea of preparing for the poor people after the wreck—anything you like, only take him away."

Gilbert was much shocked, but lost not a moment in doing what was so necessary.

The task became less difficult, for it was now clear that the schooner would weather the island itself, and the rescuers left the rocks on which they had stood, in order to hurry down the ravine past the ruins of the Castle,

and up on to the cliffs opposite. This took them past the Vicarage, and the clergyman persuaded the Earl to come in for a while, and help their arrangements.

As they walked quickly, Michael informed young Ellerton of the terrible position in which his brother stood; and also requested Lady Margaret, who retained her self command with extraordinary power, to go back to the inn and break the fearful news to the mother and sister of the apparently doomed young nobleman.

To the east side of Penaluna Head, or Island, there is first a tiny bay, called the Castle Cove, which is not however fit to shelter a vessel, although lying quite under

the shadow of the great mass of rock; beyond that, a low point runs out and shuts off the larger though still small bay which is bounded by the dark grey side of the Willapark, so called from its resemblance to the larger cliff of that name a little further on at Boscastle. This precipice, which rises in a sheer wall from the waters' edge to the height of two hundred and fifty or three hundred feet, does not continue very far round the shore of the bay, but gives place to an uneven slope of broken rocks, and patches of short grass. The whole effect is that of a former landslip, when some great mass has no doubt split short off from the Willapark, and dragged with it all the neighbour-

ing soil and lumps of rock that were not firmly fixed in their place.

It soon became evident that the schooner, although she had just managed to weather the island, could not escape the fate which threatened her. It was out of possibility that she could range up to windward sufficiently to clear the Willapark Point.

Apparently her captain recognised this, and like a good seaman resolved when he could not avoid going on shore, to choose as far as possible his own place for doing so.

Just when the yacht appeared to be about in another instant to dash herself against the cruel precipice, she was suddenly brought before the wind and run up on the scarcely less dan-

gerous reef of huge boulders which stretched along at the foot of the slope beyond it.

Even here the breakers were so fierce that it was impossible the timbers of the vessel could long hold together, and the lives of those on board could be saved only by immediate action.

The schooner was firmly wedged between two enormous blocks of fallen slate. Michael and the coast-guardsmen climbed down to the lowest part of the rough slope which would afford them any secure footing. Yet a space of at least fifty yards separated them from the yacht. This space was occupied at one moment by a seething torrent, as the great waves thundered in: at the next by a still

more dangerous jumble of fragments from the fallen cliff, and through the deep chasms between these, thick foamy water swirled and gulped as the under-draught dragged it back with irresistible force.

The gale lulled for a second or two after its victory. Seizing the opportunity, the coast-guard lieutenant aimed a rocket well across the hull of the schooner. The line it carried was at once seized by her crew, and the thick hawser attached to it was drawn on board and made fast; on this the netting of the life-escape was adjusted so as travel freely and be hauled on at either end.

The tall fine figure of Lord Ellerton was now, of course, visible clearly enough except for the driving spray

and flakes of foam, as he and the captain assisted and encouraged the men, all of whom were, one by one, hoisted safely on shore.

The 'Ariel' had been on a long cruise, and for her tonnage was on this account heavily manned. By the time that the crew, some fifteen in number, were rescued, it became evident that the brave little vessel could not last out much longer. Captain Harris only yielded to Lord Ellerton's positive command to enter the escape before him. As he did so and was rapidly landed, a great wave carried away the 'Ariel's' stern.

Lord Ellerton, not losing his self-command, hastened to pull back the empty netting for the last time, but was unable to accomplish the

task; as the schooner altered her position, when freed from the weight of her stern, and pitched forward heavily. He was knocked down by the shock, and was not only half stunned, but received some serious injury; for on trying to scramble in a confused manner to his feet, he found that he had lost the power to lift himself. The water was now rushing clean through the fore part of the vessel, which still however held together. Of course this could not last long, and the young nobleman gave himself up for lost. His head was indeed too much confused by the effect of his fall, for him to realise very clearly what this imminent prospect of death meant, and he was in great physical pain as well.

As he lay thus, happily entangled in the rigging of the broken foremast, round which the hawser had been made fast, and thus saved from being washed away, he heard, as if in a dream, Michael's well known voice shouting to him.

"Hold on, George, for God's sake! you will be safe yet."

Tresidder had seen that his friend was injured, while the escape had got foul, and would not work either way. Wasting no time in words, he had clambered hand over hand down the hawser, and as he called was rapidly disentangling the gear. The netting would have to bear a double load, for even if Lord Ellerton could in his present state support himself in it, it was out of the question

that the wreck could live long enough for the two journeys.

Supporting his friend carefully, and lightening the weight by throwing his own arm over the hawser, which tore it to the bone as they were dragged up in terrified haste by the men on shore, Michael and his burden reached land safely. As the strong arms of the sailors grasped the two young men directly that they were within reach, and lifted them triumphantly on to the ledges, another great wave broke on the 'Ariel,' and of the saucy schooner no two planks remained together.

Great was the cheer that greeted the successful accomplishment of Tresider's courageous act, but Lady Margaret Charteris, who was still among the

crowd, was unable to thank him as he deserved for the rescue of her betrothed at the risk of his own life. The strain of the last period of suspense and excitement had been too great for her endurance, and she had fallen down in a dead faint as she saw Tresidder hanging over the boiling water, when bound on his desperate errand.

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY FERNDALE'S condition of mind during the shipwreck may be imagined. Her husband had at first the intention of concealing from her the dreadful intelligence which, as soon as they reached the Vicarage, Mr. Gilbert had communicated to him; but fortunately he decided, on second thoughts, that in the end it might

prove more cruel to attempt to spare her the pain of suspense.

To a person of her imperious disposition, the shock of finding, after his long absence, her idolised son injured so terribly, as the young nobleman proved to be, might have been dangerous. As it was, the miserable hour of doubt which she had passed, the harrowing uncertainty whether or no he would be saved at all, made his mother gratefully accept the fact of his escape even under these circumstances.

Like many women who are not remarkable for tenderness in general, she was an admirable nurse, where, as in this case, all the most womanly feelings of her nature were

thoroughly aroused. Certainly at times during her son's illness, Lady Ferndale's patience would give way as some sailor, who had escaped unhurt from the same disaster, chanced to pass her window. She would clench her hand and murmur half audibly some bitter words of complaint.

It was grievously hard to see her own talented son thus struck down, and the noble career she had marked out for him arrested, while those insignificant peasants had come off scot-free.

Though proud, the Countess was however just, and in a short while her irritation would subside, as she reflected that her son's obstinacy had caused the disaster which might have

cost so many poor fellows their lives.

The 'Ariel,' on her voyage home, had fallen in with a south-west wind soon after passing the Straits of Gibraltar, and this would have brought her with perfect safety to Falmouth. Captain Harris who knew the dangers of the North Cornish coast had arranged to take this course, but the young lord had interfered, as he was bent upon landing as if he had dropped from the skies somewhere close to Portruan. Certainly at that time the weather appeared settled, and this south-west wind would, if it continued, no doubt carry them as safely up the Bristol as up the English Channel; moreover after dropping Lord Ellerton, the

Captain could run straight on to Ilfracombe, where his wife and family lived. Against his better judgment Harris yielded the point, but they were not much to the northward of the Scilly Islands, before he bitterly repented having done so. The wind began to veer round, and in another twenty-four hours was blowing strongly from the opposite point of the compass.

The rest of the story was soon told. Handy as the 'Ariel' was, and staunch for her size, she could not be kept sufficiently up to windward in such a gale as came on, but was driven in shore, and obliged to commit suicide as has been seen.

Lord Ellerton had done what he could to remedy the mischief he had

in part caused. He had worked hard himself, and had determined that the safety of every soul on board should be secured before he would attempt to leave the vessel. As it chanced, too, he was now paying dearly for his fault, and had alone suffered bodily injury from it.

But the captain was none the more comforted for the loss of his master's beautiful schooner, and kind as Tresidder was in holding him blameless, he went home utterly out of heart with himself, and well nigh resolved to give up his calling in disgust.

In truth, Michael had too much to occupy his thoughts, to let him dwell upon the fate of the yacht. For the time slipped by rapidly between Christmas and Easter,

and the result of the trial had gradually ceased to be considered doubtful, even by those friends who, would have most rejoiced at his success. Among them, the Ferndales would have grudged no amount of money that could have helped to win the cause of this man, who had done much, very much, by his tender care last summer to ensure their son's recovery from the Malta fever, and had now undoubtedly rescued him from certain death.

But what could all the money in the world do? If Philip was Nicholas Tresidder's son, he was entitled to Portruan. Moreover, all the Colonel and Lady Eveline's care for the property would only have been for his benefit, while

the funds which had accumulated from the success of the mines, would all go to pay up the many years of back rent which Philip was entitled to, and would certainly claim.

Lord Ferndale had begged him in the most earnest manner to consider himself as one of them, as George's brother; and to allow himself to be provided for as if he were so: but of course the offer was not accepted by Michael, much as he was touched by the kindness that prompted it.

Bertie Cunninghame had been obliged to return to London during the last part of March; but he came down again to Cornwall in time to be with his cousin at Bodmin during

the Assizes. Naturally, as the family of Tresidder was one of the best known in all Cornwall, the trial, on which the possession of their ancient estates turned, excited more interest among the people of the county than any other cause in the list. Of course, too, the mere legal spectacle was most imposing. For a stake of such magnitude, the leaders of the circuit were engaged on either side, and the greatest luminaries of the law came down "special" in addition.

No amount of forensic talent could, however, weaken, much less explain away the evidence, which Burrows had collected in his client Philip's favour. It is true that Ruth had not been discovered, and that consequently there was only one witness and that was

the plaintiff, Philip himself, to the actual finding of the letters.

His interest in the result would, probably, have made his own evidence of little weight, had not there been so many collateral facts clearly proved in support of it: but now Nicholas Turnwell appeared to be beyond all shadow of doubt identified with Nicholas Tresidder.

Old Betty Hawken told that coming of young Nicholas to the cottage on the wild Christmas Eve thirty years ago, and described how his hunting clothes were found in his room in the morning, while the other suit was missing.

Next came, all the way from Cardiff, an ancient fisherman and his son; both of whom had been of the crew,

(the first as skipper, the second as handy boy) of the strange lugger which had given him the passage from Padstow to Trebarwith, and all the men on board of which had witnessed his meeting with Ellen.

They were followed by Ellen's servant at the cottage, though the little maid of former days was now the stout and middle-aged mother of a family.

She also well remembered that arrival on Christmas Day, and the marriage which followed it. She had seen the bridegroom often before at the cottage, and been told by her mistress to call him Mr. Turnwell. But with a girl's curiosity she had also peeped at the register as they were signing it at Penaluna, and could distinctly swear

that the "Nicholas Turnwell," in the volume now produced in court, was the signature then written by the husband.

The next link was a great success, for at Ilminster and Taunton had been unearthed two decrepid stablemen; who, since the railroad age, were fallen from their high estate, but had been formerly coachman and guard of the famous "Quicksilver Mail" on the great Western road. They proved by memory, and by an old way-bill that two passengers of the name of Turnwell, a man and woman both young, had travelled from Exeter to the Bull and Mouth Inn at Holborn, on the 26th of December that same year.

After this, the identification of the

father was continuously proved, while as to Philip's birth within twelve months of the marriage, there was the direct testimony of the nurse as well as of the doctor who had attended Ellen.

What could be done against so complete a history as this? Burrows had kept his proofs very quiet latterly, and Michael Tresidder's advisers were not definitely aware, up to the trial, of their tremendous strength. It required all the self-command his life of advocacy had given him, to prevent even the Attorney-General from showing his dismay at the case made out by the leader on the other side; as one after another, the statements of his opening speech were conclusively proved to be facts.

As for Philip, who was in Court all through, he was at no pains to conceal his exultation. During his own evidence, he had been nervous and excited, and had evidently been taking strong stimulants to keep himself up; but after that, as he sat by Burrows, his face flushed more and more, as the look of triumph increased until it spread over all his features.

Perhaps, without any undue interest in the rising sun, it was natural that the public should honour the plaintiff with more notice than they did the defendant, who was also in Court most of the time. He was the hero of a romantic story.

But there were not many who did not think, that if to have his chance

of wealth, a man were also obliged to be the sort of fellow Philip appeared to be, he would be buying his riches terribly dear.

As we have seen before, the face was a handsome one as to feature, but the expression was never pleasant, and from continued hard drinking and other low debauchery, had now acquired a repulsive, and almost a villainous character.

No cross examination could have been more searching than that to which all the plaintiff's witnesses were subjected, but not one was shaken in any material point.

The defendant's counsel determined that it was useless to attempt to call witnesses of their own, who might, indeed, prove Philip to be a black-

guard, but could not disprove the story he had brought forward in such completeness.

The speech in defence, therefore, laid most stress upon the unexplained absence of Ruth Turnwell, and upon the false name under which Nicholas Tresidder, if he it was, had been married. But the speaker was fully aware that his words might, and probably would, be without effect on the jury. They could, if they chose, treat the first fault as obliterated by the other evidence; while as to the last, if Ellen at the time of the marriage believed her husband's real name to be Turnwell, and her servant's evidence raised a strong presumption of this, the marriage would not be invalid.

During the last part of the speech "Fanny" Ellerton had, with some difficulty, pushed his way into Court, and been whispering eagerly to Bertie Cunninghame, while there appeared to be some cause of agitation outside, for the crowd near the door were one after another turning with some excitement towards it.

In another minute, Bertie had turned to whisper in his turn to Tresidder's junior counsel, by whom he was sitting, and who was plainly enough delighted by the information he received. Hastily writing a few lines, he handed it to his leader, who was on the point of sitting down, but paused to read the note; and then, instead of resuming his seat began again to speak.

His voice was perfectly quiet, and indeed rather low in tone, but a gleam of triumph was in his eyes, and in all parts of the Court every syllable was distinctly heard as he said,

"I have submitted to you, gentlemen of the jury, that even on the hypothesis that Nicholas Turnwell, and Nicholas Tresidder, were one and the same person, this marriage of which we have heard was not such a marriage as the law will consider valid; since one of the parties to it chose knowingly to go through the solemn ceremony under a false name, and the other must have been cognisant of, and therefore a party to the deceit. But I am now in a position to assert that, under no possible cir-

cumstances, could Ellen Borlase have been legally married to Nicholas Turnwell, whether he be Nicholas Tresidder or not upon the day to which this certificate refers.

"Ellen Borlase was at that time—she would be now if she were still alive—the wife of another man. Her husband, Richard Borlase, was not drowned, though all his shipmates were at the time his vessel was lost. He is alive now! he is in this Court! and I propose to call him as my first witness. The only other witnesses with whom I shall consider it necessary to trouble you, will be two highly respectable natives of the same village as Borlase, and who have known him from their boyhood. Call Richard Borlase."

This, then, was the explanation of the crowd at the door of the Court, and of young Ellerton's whispering, and in a certain sense it was the consequence of the wreck of the 'Ariel,' that at the last moment the tables were thus effectually turned, and Philip's victory converted into ignominious defeat. Five minutes ago he felt himself to be virtually the head of the ancient family of Tresidder, and owner of Portruan, with its venerable house and rich estate. Now he was proved to have no right even to the humble name of Turnwell.

When the trial had finished in the only way possible after the appearance of Borlase, a great cheer rose from the crowd, who, with delightful wisdom after the fact, were now

firmly convinced that they had always believed that Michael would win the day. To him the revulsion of feeling had been scarcely less than to Philip; but it was of a kind which a man soon learns to bear.

People do not, so often, as the frequent use of the expression would imply, go mad with joy. Yet, for a while, as old Carmenow said, "The Squire did seem dazed like," and intently as he endeavoured to listen to what was passing in Court, he found it impossible to clear his head so as to gather anything clearly beyond the main point, that he was to be reinstated in all his old position.

His return from the Assize Court up the long Bodmin street, to his

lodging at the hotel, was a kind of triumphal procession; but it was a huge relief at last to escape from the rather demonstrative sympathy of the admiring crowd, and talk the matter over quietly with his real friends.

"Tell me how you discovered this man once more," said he to 'Fanny' Ellerton. "No doubt it was all told in Court, but I could not follow the story then."

"Oh! the affair was as simple as possible, and would have come out just the same without me sooner or later; but I brought on the transformation scene just at the nick of time.

"You know the inn next door to our house at Penaluna?

"Well, there is a glee-club which holds its meetings there, and not a bad one I can tell you. Since poor George has been getting better, I have frequently been in to lend the light of my countenance to the display of local talent, and have heard many an amusing story there in the intervals of the singing.

"The villagers did not allude openly to this affair, in politeness I think to me as your friend; but I often caught a stray word or two about it from private conversation that might be going on in a corner. One evening I heard in this way old Gérome Dangar, the carpenter, ask another gossip.

"'Don't you mind that man who used to come about here from Port

Isaac years agone, a sailoring chap who had made a bit of money? Seeming to me he might have had something to say to this young widow woman: for I can call to mind that there was a brave disturbance about his wife, who could not be found, when he turned up after having been lost, as they said, for many a year.'

"Of course I started at this, and got old Gérome to tell me all he remembered. This set the whole village talking; and about two days afterwards a man, who was working at the new mine, but had come from Swansea, called to tell me that he was almost sure this Borlase was still alive; at least, that only a few months back he had met an old

sailor of the name, and about the age, at a place on the Welsh Coast.

"I suppose I ought to have sent up at once to Mr. Townsend; but I thought it would only waste time, so got my miner to accompany me, and started off for Port Isaac, from which a boat was soon found to risk the weather, and take me to Machynleth, the place where Borlase had been seen.

"We found him living there in a retired cottage, and though he resented at first my attempt to revive past trouble, he gave in when I showed him that justice to you required it.

"It seems that, when his vessel shortly after the gale, which knocked

her almost to pieces, broke up, he and the other men had managed to lash a few planks together, and floated about for some days on their miserable raft. It was a horrible time, for they had no provisions, and one after another, two seamen and the mate died of starvation. Borlase was stronger and held on to life, but he was more than half dead, when by a lucky chance a small merchant vessel fell in with the raft, and took him on board.

"She was bound on a long cruizing voyage to various parts, and five years passed before she returned to England and he could seek his wife. Then he had found the cottage at Trebarwith shut up, and that not a soul, far or near, could give him

tidings of her. All they knew was, that she with all else had been forced to think him dead; that after three years and more she had married again, a young man called Turnwell, who was a stranger to those parts; and that neither had ever been heard of since.

"How delighted I was at my discovery you may guess! For all that was now wanted could be easily obtained. We brought Borlase back with us to Port Isaac, soon found old acquaintances there who could identify him and bear out his story, and as you saw, I produced the whole party in court in time for a grand closing scene."

A word is sufficient to tell the fate of Philip, upon whom this chance which he could not know or

avoid, had worked such an awful retribution for his unnatural treatment of his old father. The shock of disappointment drove him mad. Indeed it was little wonder that a brain excited as his had been by a long course of drink was unable to stand such a severe trial.

The scene in Court had been horrible, for glaring at the old sailor who told his story in the witness-box with a pathetic simplicity that touched nearly the whole audience, Philip started from his seat, and would have sprung at him, had not Burrows and another man forcibly held him down. Then falling back upon the floor in a fit, he foamed at the mouth, and gnashed his teeth with the uncontrollable rage of a maniac,

while as he was carried out, his hands clenched and tore at all by whom he passed.

His sister, Ruth Turnwell, learnt from the reports in the newspapers the result of her brother Philip's claim, and also the fearful effect which the shock had had upon him. Much as he had sinned against her, it was only natural to a sister, especially to one of Ruth's noble disposition, that she should at once come to his aid.

Happily her sacrifice of self had not to endure long, for he was carried off by another fit of epilepsy before many months had passed by. At his death, Ruth declined any further to receive the personal assistance which for his sake only she had for a short time accepted from

Michael Tresidder. She, however, accepted from him, at his urgent request, a sufficiently large sum of money to enable her to start a great missionary work in the East of London. She lives there an energetic and useful, and therefore in the highest sense a happy life; but she does not wish that her path should again cross that of Tresidder or his friends.

With Mrs. Gilbert alone, and through her with her former charge, Carrie, does she keep up any communication. That good old lady had insisted on seeing her, and had begged her again to make Penaluna Vicarage her home. When Ruth had refused, and said that she could not even now explain the mystery of her departure, Mrs. Gilbert had replied:

"My dear, I want no explanation at all, I have loved and respected you all through, and I shall continue to do both still. I am sure you do not wish to break an old woman's heart, but you will go far to do so if you insist on separating yourself from me again, altogether."

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

IT is not many weeks since the trial, and on this fresh Spring morning, the aspect of Portruan Manor is even more charming than it was when we last saw it, with the bright hoar-frost sparkling on lawn and wood.

The internal injuries received by Lord Ellerton at the wreck of the 'Ariel' have yielded to a greater extent, than it was at first feared

that they would, to the skill and care of his doctors. He has been moved here as soon as Michael Tresidder has known that he is to remain master of the house, and is now sitting by the open windows of the pleasant library, talking to his friend.

"Something in your attitude as you shade your eyes from the sun, and look down into the garden below reminds me, Michael, of our talk at Naples. We spoke then of beginning the real life of the world, but we did not, either of us, expect to do so with such a narrow escape of ending it, as we have both had. Mine was the more literal, but yours has been little less, practically, for if you had lost this place, you must have, after a time, got

thoroughly out of your original groove."

"I must indeed," said Tresidder, who had been watching Lady Margaret's graceful figure, as she came up the steps of the different terraces from the water, with her hat hanging from one hand, and the pleasant soft breeze playing with her hair.

Just then she passed out of sight round a corner of the building, and Michael turned his whole attention to his friend, as he continued:

"These kind of things make one think seriously. I know that as a poor man I ought to have found it easy to keep up heart, and to make my own way in the world, but no doubt it would have been a hard matter at first. When a man has grown accustomed to

look round him from the kind of vantage ground, which the accident of fairly good fortune and position gives him, he feels marvellously small if suddenly forced to stand on nothing at all but his own merits."

"Yes, and when one has twice within six months been within an ace of leaving the world altogether," replied Ellerton, "even the pedestals, such as they are get to seem rather low. However, I was thinking more of one special step in life, *i.e.* marriage, than intending to moralise on the whole. You remember that you were engaged to attend my wedding. When do you think I shall be ready?"

Lord Ellerton, as he asked this

question, raised his eyes to look at his companion's face; but Michael appeared at the moment to be anxious about the hour for administering the medicine, which was still necessary. He was bending over the little table upon which the bottles stood, and did not answer at once.

"You have seen a good deal of Margaret now," continued the young lord, still watching the other, "and I should like to hear, if she has come up to what I led you to expect. Will she make a good wife do you think?"

"As far as I can judge, Lady Margaret Charteris is as noble in character, as she is undoubtedly beautiful," said Tresidder stiffly, and

apparently unable to satisfy himself as to the medicine, for he did not turn round from the table. In fact he felt hot and angry at the careless tone in which the question was put. Ellerton's eyes had a gleam of mischief, as well as amusement in them as he spoke again.

"I am afraid my physic is rather difficult to understand, but I wish you would kindly give me that bottle of brown-stuff at the corner. I am almost sure this is the time for taking the draught." Then as Michael rather gravely brought the bottle to him, he observed suddenly, while holding his glass to be filled, "By the bye, I suppose you will be marrying some one yourself, now that everything is settled again. Much as I like your

old house, no man could exist as a solitary bachelor in a county, so far from the rest of the world as Cornwall. If you would make haste, our weddings might both take place on the same day. Did not Margaret tell me something about a Miss Trecarrel?"

The question, which was, of course, utterly groundless in reality, irritated yet more the man to whom it was addressed. Michael could not help continuing to pour out the draught, which happened to require careful measurement, but he bit his lips and was unable to repress altogether an exclamation of annoyance.

How much longer he would have been played with, it is difficult to say, had not Lady Margaret Charteris

herself come into the room at this juncture, with a bunch of flowers in her hand.

"I have brought you the first good primroses of the season, George," she said, putting them into his hand, "they ought to have been out some time ago, but are very backward this year."

Michael Tresidder was about to take advantage of the opportunity of escape, and was turning to leave the room; but Lord Ellerton stopped him by putting his hand on his arm, while he answered Lady Margaret.

"Thank you, they are very pretty, and it is very nice to have a beautiful young lady, who is in duty bound to pay me such delicate attention."

The mischievous look appeared in

his eyes again, as the girl coloured almost painfully at his words, and then grew pale as he continued.

"I have been telling Michael, that he ought now to follow my example, and make Miss Trecarrel, (that was the name, was it not, Margaret?) a happy woman."

"What can you mean, George? you know that I have never said anything of the sort about Mr. Tresidder," said Lady Margaret indignantly, and looking so decidedly uncomfortable, that her cousin stopped his raillery at once, and laughing outright, said in an entirely different tone.

"It is a shame to tease you both, I know, but you must forgive a man who does want a little amusement,

after being forced to keep quiet so long."

For a moment or two he remained silent. Then, with much feeling, he continued, as he took Michael Tresidder's hand, and held it with that of Lady Margaret in his own.

"These little fingers are mine by right. What I might keep, I may surely give away; and I deliver them to the custody of this brown fist, which has twice given me life."

"No, no," as both endeavoured to free themselves from his grasp. "I will not let you go, either of you, though you need not look at each other, unless you like. Please to listen to me.

"You know that a sick man must think a good deal, and when I was

lying on my back, I could see perhaps a little sharper than I used to do. I do not give up my bride because I do not hope, and that in a very short time, to get well and strong again; but because I am sure that we two, Margaret, shall be happier as brother and sister, than we could ever have been as man and wife. I found this out many weeks ago; I saw that this transparent little woman's heart was not mine, although she did not dream of breaking her promise to me. I saw, too, by a hundred slight tokens that this foolish man was deeply attached to her; but that he was too honest to allow her to see his love. I was not quite sure, I confess, as to your feelings, Margaret, towards him until the time of the

trial. During that, you were by my side at Penaluna; but, as it went on, you betrayed plainly enough, that all your whole interest was in the Court at Bodmin.

"While the issue was doubtful, I schemed various plans of making you both happy, even if Portruan was lost; but I own that, knowing Michael's love of independence, I was sorely puzzled how he could be made to fall in with any of my ideas. As matters have turned out, the only difficulty is with yourselves, and that I expect you to get over; for my sake, I think you will oblige me so far."

The last words were said with a smile, as he relinquished his hold of the two hands, which did not, strange

to say, now show any haste to separate, and walked to the door. As he opened it he turned for an instant to say,

"My father and mother knew that I meant to do this, and are quite happy that it should be so. Now as I do mean to be present at Margaret's wedding, though as best man and not as bride-groom, I ought to go and rest up stairs while you settle the day here alone. Remember, Michael, that you must not put it off too long, since, as Bertie Cunninghame informed you this morning, the General Election will be in August, and you are now pledged to stand."

THE END.

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